INTERVIEWED: GREGG BISSONETTE, MIKKEY DEE, KAZ RODRIGUEZ, ROBIN DIMAGGIO

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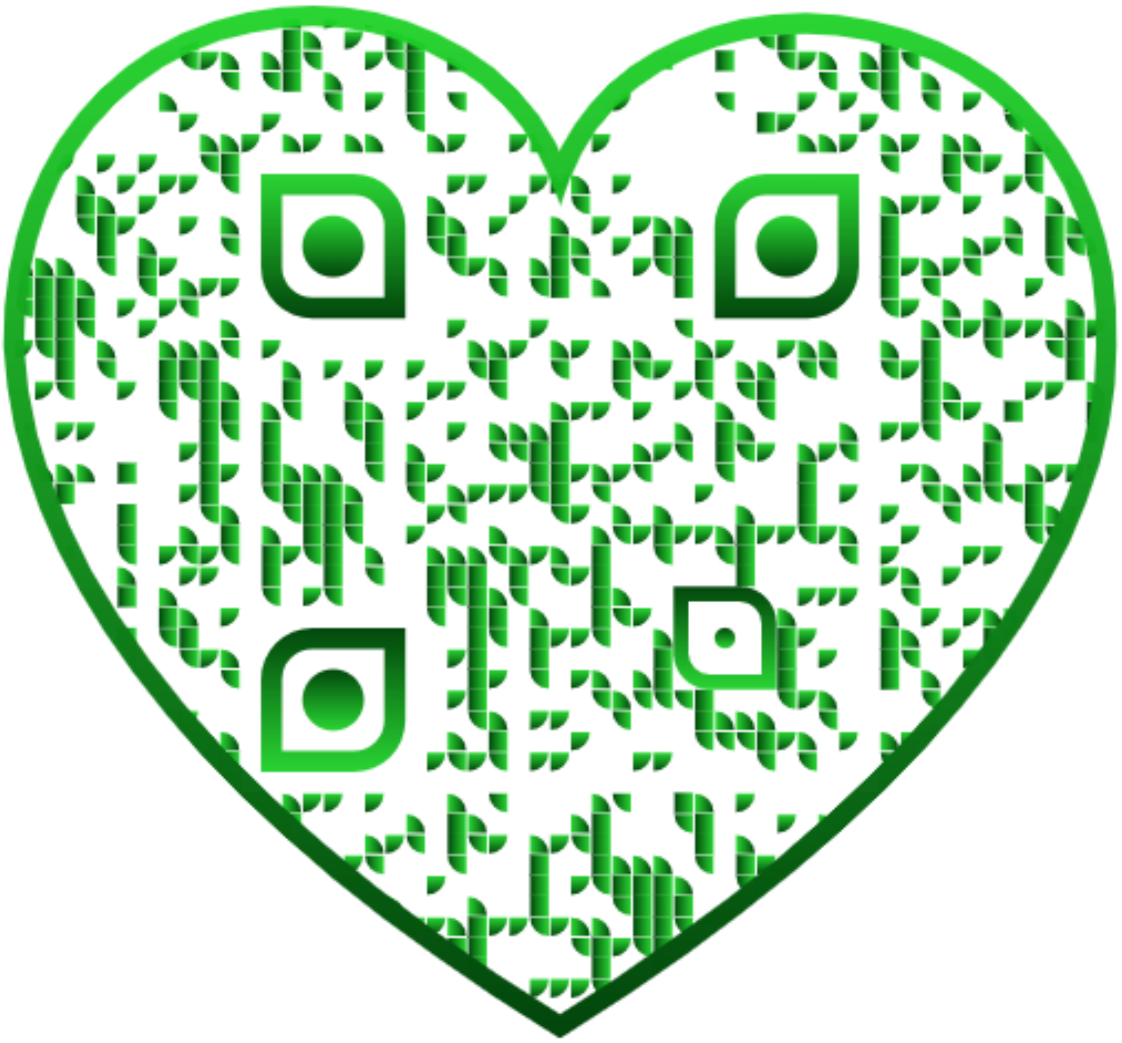

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ISSUE 150

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ON THE ONE

(HUNDRED AND FIFTY)

Welcome to our 150th issue! We're having a bit of a celebration in this January issue to mark the occasion and, although I say it myself, I think we have a lot to celebrate and be proud of at *Drummer*. The drum community is a great one to be a part of and even in a digital age, people still appreciate the magazine. I've had an enjoyable time speaking to contributors and previous editors for our 150 feature – they have some good stories to tell! We're still going strong after 13 years so, most importantly, thank you for reading the magazine and supporting it.

Our main interview this month is with the huge personality that is Gregg Bissonette. He has played on just about everything you can imagine, from film scores, TV, and advert jingles to sessions, tours and Ringo's All Starr Band. We caught up with him from his main stage performance at the London Drum Show to find out what makes him tick. We also have interviews with Mikkey Dee of Motörhead, Robin DiMaggio (MD to the United Nations) and Jessie Ware's sticksman Kaz Rodriguez.

If you were unlucky enough to miss the 2015 London Drum Show (what were you thinking?) then don't worry, we have a round-up of the weekend here for you. And why not see if you can kick off the year with a bit of good fortune by entering our competition for a 20" Meinl Byzance Extra Dry Dual crash/ride on page 20.

We've also got reviews of the Steve Gadd Band at Ronnie Scott's, as well as all of our usual top tuition, reviews, news and much more.

Here's to 2016 being a year full of drums, happiness and more drums!

Gemma, editor

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FEATURES

12 | CAUGHT LIVE: STEVE GADD BAND
44 | 150 ISSUES OF DRUMMER
48 | LONDON DRUM SHOW 2015
56 | BEAT ON THE STREET
60 | GRETSCH DRUMS – PART II

INTERVIEWS

24 | GREGG BISSONETTE
31 | ROBIN DIMAGGIO
34 | MIKKEY DEE
38 | KAZ RODRIGUEZ

REVIEWS

66 | KANDŪ TEMPEST BASIC CAJÓN
68 | AHEAD ARMOR DELUXE CYMBAL CASES
70 | MURAT DIRIL RENAISSANCE BRILLIANT CYMBALS
74 | PROLOGIX RUSS MILLER PADS
76 | NATAL ORIGINAL SERIES MAPLE KIT

REGULARS

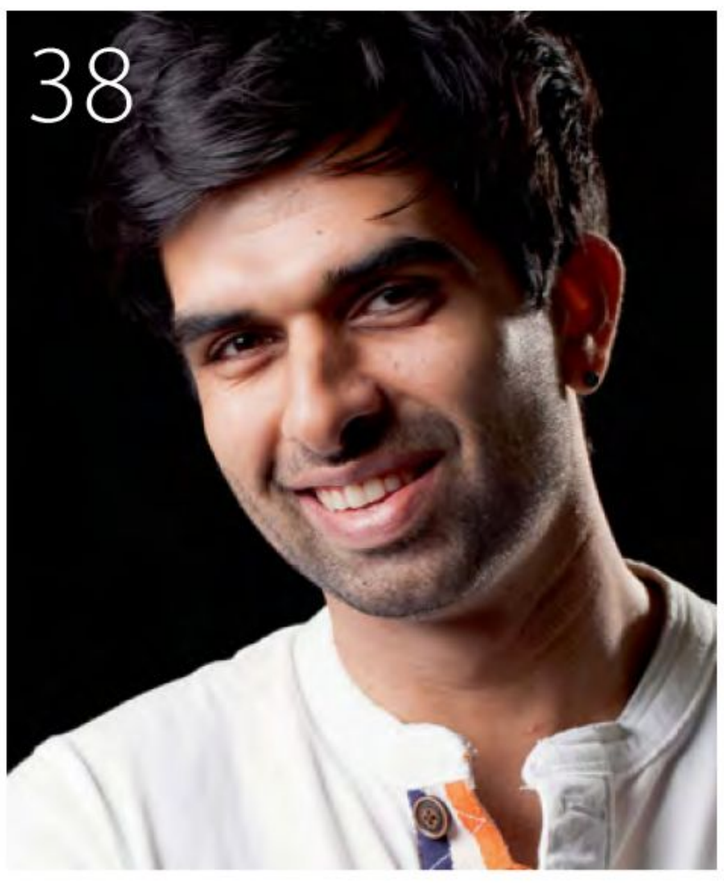
6 | NEWSBEATS
10 | LETTERS
13 | GIG GUIDE
14 | AUDIOSCREEN
16 | VINTAGE DRUMS
20 | COMPETITION
42 | THE RISER
52 | DRUM TECH DIARIES
55 | MUSICIANS' UNION
94 | A PROBLEM SHARED
96 | THE FUTURE DRUMMER
98 | MAD, BAD AND DANGEROUS

TUITION

83 Guest Tuition: Tom Meadows
85 Dean Hendy
86 Steve Timms
87 James Smale
88 James Hester
89 Anika Nilles
90 Sebastiaan de Krom
91 Will Fry
92 Ethan Lewis Maltby
93 Pete Lockett

24 GREGG BISSONETTE

DIRECT FROM HIS MAIN STAGE PERFORMANCE AT THE LONDON DRUM SHOW



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NEWSBEATS

ALL THE LATEST NEWS FROM THE WORLD OF DRUMMING

TEACHER TRAINING FROM **STEVE WHITE**

Steve White took part in the first Yamaha Drum Encounters Day on 8 November at his new endorser's HQ in Milton Keynes. More than 20 drum teachers from Yamaha's UK music school locations come together to participate in an intensive day of advanced teacher training from the master drummer and drum educator.

White amazed and inspired with a unique combination of breathtaking playing, invaluable advice and practice routines that put the teachers through their paces using practice pads and full kit. After completing the training successfully, the day concluded with Steve White presenting certificates and Yamaha hosting an informal dinner that enabled the teachers to talk to him and Yamaha management, as well as sharing teaching experiences and ideas with their counterparts from Yamaha Music School locations, that boast over 1,000 UK drum students on roll.

Steve said, "It was a great day meeting up with all the Yamaha teachers, everyone is so enthusiastic to consolidate and share their knowledge and skills. It's going to be a great future for Yamaha in drum education. On a personal note the Absolute Hybrid Series drums are playing, sounding and performing beautifully." One of only four musicians to have played at both Live Aid and Live 8, the highly acclaimed debut album *Electric Blend* by his new band the Family Silver has garnered him a nomination for 'Best Rock Drummer' by Music Radar. The album recently entered at 20 in the iTunes Rock Chart and at 31 in the Official UK Independent Chart.

JP BOUVET LAUNCHES NEW WEBSITE

2011 Guitar Center Drum-Off champion and generally all-round inspiring clinician and player JP Bouvet has updated his website JPBouvetMusic.com, which houses over 250 video lessons, playalongs, interviews and more. The lessons are downloadable in SD or HD for offline studying and cover topics such as being creative, ghost notes, grooves, chops, odd times and beyond.

JP said, "I consider the website a window into my practice room where I share things that I personally find useful, fun and essential in developing as a drummer and creative person."

JP is part of the Common Thread clinics and tours, which are a joint force of drumming knowledge with Mike Johnston and Matt Halpern.

REGAL TIP LAUNCHES NEW WEBSITE

Regal Tip drum sticks have a brand new, easy-to-navigate website. Check it out at www.regaltip.com to find out more about their range of quality sticks, brushes, mallets and accessories.

YOUR DRUMS, YOUR STORY

What impact has playing the drums had on you? Has playing the drums helped you or someone you know overcome stress, depression, anxiety or any other health issue? Geoffrey Taylor is a drummer and filmmaker who is making a film on the power of drums and the effect they have on the player, no matter what age or ability they are. There are some scientific studies out there looking at music and its impact but Geoffrey is interested in the influence of drums in particular and seeing and hearing firsthand how they affect people. He is looking for anyone who might want to share his or her experience and there will be no commitment to filming or recording at this early stage. If you're interested, contact geoff@wideeyed.co.uk and see his showreel at http://bit.ly/1ICdFqz.

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VINNY APPICE

TO RELEASE DEBUT ALBUM WITH LAST IN LINE

Last In Line is formed by three original members of Dio including Def Leppard's Vivian Campbell (guitar), Vinny Appice (drums) and Jimmy Bain (bass) and named after Dio's 1984 studio album *The Last In Line*. Their debut album *Heavy Crown* will be released on 19 February by Frontiers Music SRL. The new material was written after the band toured the classic Dio songs, and Vivian Campbell will be putting time aside to go on tour with Last In Line when not touring with Def Leppard. Keep your eyes peeled for 2016 tour dates and festivals…

ROTODRUM UNVEILS ROTOGO

Rotodrum, the Italian drum manufacturer and recent exhibitor at the London Drum Show, is releasing a new kit: the RotoGo.

The RotoGo is based on the AvanTime, a patented kit that, with the use of slides and resonating chambers, can have its tuning altered to create thousands of sounds. It can also be adapted into a practice drum (by inserting a mute into the upper snare) or an electronic kit (by inserting a trigger between the mute and the head).

The RotoGo is, like the AvanTime, as big as a traditional kick drum, but will be 40 per cent light than its predecessor. You can see the RotoGo for the first time at January's NAMM show (booth 3470, hall D). Rotodrum will also be promoting the RotoPBS, a cymbal accessory that promises to prevent breakage and enhance discs' performance.

See www.rotodrum.com and www.youtube.com/users/rotodrum for more info.

RUSSELL GILBROOK

JOINS SAKAE DRUMS

Russell Gilbrook, the respected clinician and beat-provider for the legendary rock band Uriah Heep, is now an official Sakae Drums endorsee. Uriah Heep have sold over 40 million records and have two European Grammy awards to their name. Russell and the band tour an average of 25 countries a year and are in the process of writing a new album with a world tour to follow.

Russell said, "It is a great honour for me to play Sakae Drums. The sound is what I've been searching for for many years. It reflects my playing completely and is exactly the sound required for a classic rock band like Uriah Heep."

Russell's kit configuration can be found at www.sakaedrums.com.

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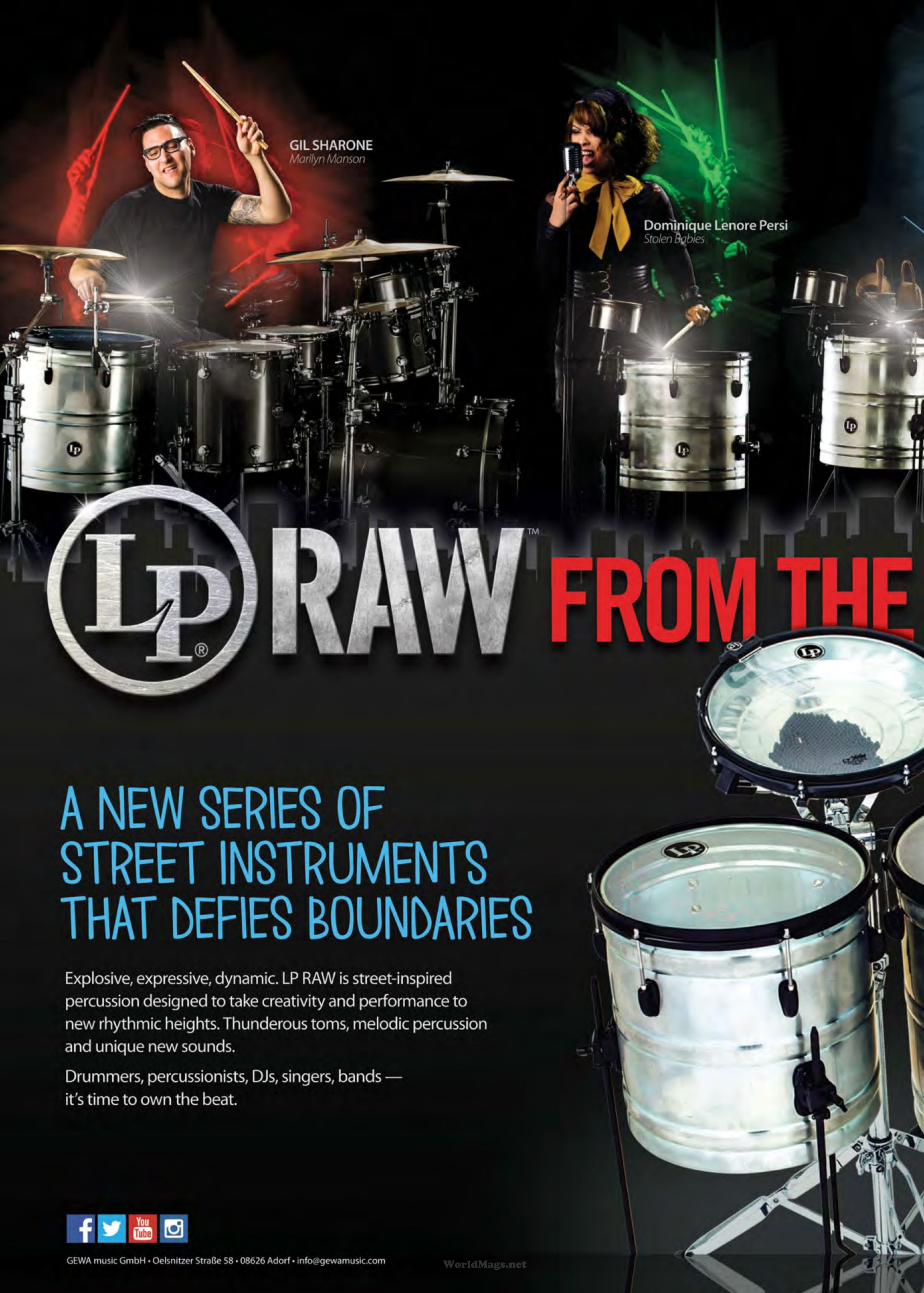

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YOUR VIEWS

LETTER OF THE MONTH

FAMILY FUN

I took my son Finn to the London Drum Show for the first time this year and we are both still buzzing! I think he must have tried out every single bit of kit at the show and we found the artists really inspiring. Mike Johnston was the highlight for us in the education zone - he was the perfect mix of funny and informative and Finn has gone away with a new hero to follow with his drumming. Thank you for putting on such an incredible weekend. I'm not a drummer but I loved it too and we decided that we will be there again next year as we were on the way home!

Tina, Cambridge (via email)

Hi Tina,

Thanks for your email. We're really glad to hear that you and your son enjoyed the show so much and are looking forward to seeing you there next year! We wish him all the best with his drumming – maybe you'll take it up too?! ED.

IN IT TO WIN IT

Found out today that I had won the Pearl Masters Series snare drum from your magazine competition. I had an amazing day at the London Drum Show on the Saturday and this news is the cherry on the cake! I came away totally inspired and to see the various professionals on stage, you realise how much hard work and practice they have put in to their music. I can't wait to enjoy the drum. Thanks also for a great magazine; I particularly enjoy the lessons/practice section. As a relative beginner it is a great learning tool.

Mike Jarrett (via email)

Hi Mike,

Thank you for your email and you're welcome! We are really pleased to hear that you enjoyed the London Drum Show and thanks for your comments about the magazine. Good luck with all of your drumming and we hope you have fun with the competition prize! ED.

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STEVE GADD BAND

Where: Ronnie Scott's, Soho, London **When:** November 2015

Words: Mark Youll **Images:** Benjamin Amure

A dark, red lamp-lit Ronnie's was abuzz with the sound of enthusiastic drummers discussing Gadd's licks, some of them even wandering out to the lip of the stage area to get a closer look at his infamous black Yamaha set, gleaming under the club's neon logo. Normally at a drum-centric gig such as this, the audience might soon expect the atmosphere of anticipation to be sliced open with an all-arms-flying solo opener. But in true Gadd style, tonight's show was more geared around great music and groove than showy athletics.

The band (and what a band) eased in with 'The Windup', Walt Fowler's tight melody on flugelhorn rumbled by bassist Jimmy Johnson strumming a quirky funk line to the dinner-bell ting of Gadd's ride. Michael Landau on guitar and organist Larry Goldings soared and squelched respectively, finding their space to stretch out and solo as the feel flipped to something more syncopated and James Brown-like. When it came to Gadd's own solo, by now keyed up by Goldings' percussive prodding, the air was thick with cowbell, crisp military snare rolls and hissing hi-hats cutting through the whistles and cheers of an already awestruck audience.

Typical of the kind of R&B Gadd laid down in the 70s with pianist Richard Tee, 'Foam Home' was more blasé and gospel-like. Its gloopy riff on Rhodes was doubled on bass and pushed along with a straight eighth kit feel discernible even through a fuzzy wah solo from Landau. A lively 'Green Foam' (allegedly inspired by material found to muffle Gadd's kick drum) began with a country feel in two before broadening to a bluesy shuffle figure festering with reedy organ. Driving the whole band harder here, Gadd's taut tap of ride cymbal was abruptly perturbed by a psychedelic-style wash of mad guitar bends, violent piano sweeps and the sort of trumpet that brought *Bitches Brew*-era Miles Davis to mind.

Things eventually cooled and with the exception of a few clinking wine glasses, a short spell in silence was met with the sweet muted trumpet melody of 'Ask Me', a ballad festooned with finger-picked guitar, delicate snare rolls and a splash of hats. Gadd's slick groove for a funkier 'Way Back Home' was as understated at first. Essaying a metronomic-tight rim-click pattern through solos, he slipped in a backbeat on floor tom to announce his own break, and a rush of 32nd notes between hi-hat and the rim of his snare moved to toms and into some of his infamous ratamacues around the set.

With the set now in full swing, a bluesy tribute to the late George Duke, 'Duke's Anthem' was followed by 'Bye Bye Blackbird', a piece popular with Gadd fans, having long been a feature on his clinic tours. The sublime poignancy of the breathy trumpet and swirling church organ was marked with some lush brush work as long, scratchy sweeps on the snare quickened to fluttery jazz motifs punctuated by the odd kick drum bomb and spry cymbal pulse.

Gadd once more raised the tempo for a disco-driven 'Sly Boots', sizzling with sock-style sixteenths and fours on the floor before leaving the crowd with one encore, Landau's beautiful 'Blues for…' A springboard for some raunchy guitar riffing, it was a tune that, again, stressed Gadd's generosity as a leader. The drummer's final 10 minutes on stage found him at his most effortless. There were no flashy fills or parting drum solo to wow the crowd, just some more great music and a great groove – of which Gadd is the undisputed king. ●

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Drummer's guide to who's coming to a venue near you!

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MOTÖRHEAD

Saturday 23 January
Newcastle City Hall, Newcastle upon Tyne
Sunday 24 January
SECC, Glasgow
Tuesday 26 January
O2 Apollo, Manchester
Wednesday 27 January
Oasis Centre, Swindon
Friday 29 January
Eventim Apollo, London
Saturday 30 January
Eventim Apollo, London

For more details and tickets
visit: http://bit.ly/1IYcWFR

THE CORRS

Tuesday 19 January
Genting Arena, Birmingham
Wednesday 20 January
Motorpoint Arena, Cardiff
Friday 22 January
Liverpool Echo Arena, Liverpool
Saturday 23 January
The O2, London
Sunday 24 January
Manchester Arena, Manchester
Tuesday 26 January
The SSE Hydro, Glasgow
Thursday 28 January
3Arena, Dublin
Friday 29 January
SSE Arena, Belfast

For more details and tickets
visit: http://bit.ly/1RnDfkT

DAUGHTER

Friday 15 January
Cambridge Corn Exchange, Cambridge
Saturday 16 January
O2 Academy, Oxford
Sunday 17 January
Brighton Dome, Brighton
Monday 18 January
Pyramid Centre, Portsmouth
Wednesday 20 January
O2 Institute, Birmingham
Thursday 21 January
Albert Hall, Manchester
Friday 22 January

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O2 Academy, Liverpool
Saturday 23 January
The Queen's Hall, Edinburgh
Monday 25 January
O2 Academy, Newcaste
Tuesday 26 January
LMUSU, Leeds

For more details and tickets
visit: http://bit.ly/1HG07IG

BEARDYMAN

Wednesday 20 January
The Lowry, Salford
Thursday 21 January
The Epstein Theatre, Liverpool
Saturday 23 January
King George's Hall, Blackburn
Sunday 24 January
The Glee Club, Nottingham

For more details and tickets
visit: http://bit.ly/1Twt2BU

ELIZA AND THE BEAR

Wednesday 20 January
The Portland Arms, Cambridge
Thursday 21 January
Waterfront, Norwich
Friday 22 January
New Roadmender, Northampton
Saturday 23 January
The Horn, St. Albans
Sunday 25 January
The Boileroom, Guildford
Monday 26 January
The Forum, Tunbridge Wells
Wednesday 28 January
The Joiners, Southampton

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visit: http://bit.ly/1N4h0LE

GRIMETHORPE COLLIERY BAND

Sunday 10 January
St George's Hall, Liverpool
Saturday 16 January
Darlington Civic Theatre

For more details and tickets
visit: http://bit.ly/1QfsErc

SLAVES

Sunday 10 January
O2 Academy & Underground, Leeds
Monday 11 January
The ABC, Glasgow
Tuesday 12 January
O2 Academy, Liverpool
Thursday 14 January
O2 Forum, London
Friday 15 January
O2 Ritz, Manchester
Saturday 16 January
O2 Ritz, Manchester

For more details and tickets
visit: http://bit.ly/1lwCoBP

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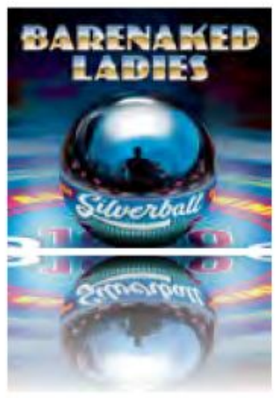
Audioscreen

WE TAKE A LOOK AT A SELECTION OF **NEW ALBUMS, DVDS AND BOOKS** WORDS: BRENT KEEFE AND DON ZULAICA

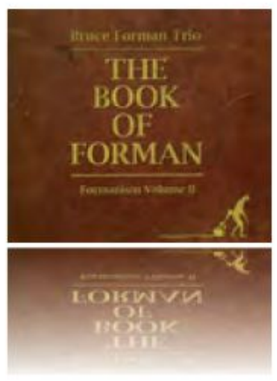


BARENAKED LADIES

Silverball

www.barenakedladies.com

Tyler Stewart has always been a grade-A song server but he also deserves mention for his harmony singing – always impressive live. There's a slower pace to some of the dealing-with-midlife ditties, like the resilient 'Get Back Up' or flat-out 'We Will Rock You'-opening of 'Here Before'. 'Say What You Want' is propelled by sixteenths, the bouncy 'Passcode' sports triplets (and a nice drum break), while the eighth-note groove of 'Matter Of Time' has that 'One Week' skip, and 'Duct Tape Heart' sounds like an 1980s Flashback Weekend. Regardless of time warp, this is a band who are comfortable in their own skin.



BRUCE FORMAN TRIO

The Book Of Forman

www.bruceforman.com

Veteran jazz guitarist Bruce Forman returns with a new trio, comprising twenty-something bassist Alex Frank (who plays at a level well beyond his years), and *Tonight Show* alum Marvin 'Smitty' Smith on drums (who we suspect is reveling in this simpler setting, being used to more bombastic late-night TV fare). 'Hate Mail (Letters Of Love)' might as well be a 'How To Comp' 101 class, such is Smitty's expert touch playing with and off of Forman's melodic flow. Ditto the traded fours of 'PC Jones', swinging six of 'The Epic Cure' (terrific solo over vamp), and up-tempo take of the Kern-Hammerstein standard 'The Song Is You'.

WEATHER REPORT

The Legendary Live Tapes: 1978-1981

www.legacyrecordings.com

For over 30 years, Peter Erskine kept his personal live Weather Report soundboard collection largely to himself but finally decided that the music was too great to not share. The result of that decision is this awesome four CD set, featuring two discs apiece from the 1978 quartet when Erskine first joined Messrs Zawinul, Shorter and Pastorius and the 1980-1981 incarnation, with additional percussionist Robert Thomas Jr. The tracks from those years, including several recorded in London, are particularly welcome given that the 1978 band was documented live on '8.30' but, frankly, it's fantastic throughout, demonstrating why WR were and remain so hugely influential.

KING CRIMSON

Thrak Box

www.dgmlive.com

In 1994, after a 10-year hiatus, King Crimson reconvened as a 'double trio', with the Discipline quartet (Adrian Belew, Tony Levin and Bill Bruford) joining forces with Robert Fripp, Trey Gunn (on stick) and Pat Mastelotto (acoustic/electronic percussion.) This incarnation reverted to more guitar-heavy, Red-era riffing with increased sonic density, while still retaining Belew's vocal sensibility. This superb 16-disc set (including 12 CDs, two DVDs and two Blu-rays) showcases this stunning group, from its inception on *Maximum VROOOM*, which augments the original rehearsal recordings from the *VROOOM* mini-album, through the sextet's sole studio album *THRAK*, included here in the original mix (2002 remaster) and a 2015 mix by Jakko Jakszyk. Plus there's an additional disc of singles, edits and promos, seven live discs from 1995/96, including *ATTAKcATHRAK*, a disc of improvisations – and much more. Additionally, *JurassiKc THRAK* is a 67-minute collage/audio documentary combining in-studio conversations with studio tracks, while the DVD and Blu-ray discs include video from a complete unreleased 1995 San Francisco show and the previously released 1995 Tokyo shows (both in 5.1 mixes), Tony Levin's 'Road Movies' documentaries plus 5.1 audio of *THRAK* and *ATTAKcATHRAK*. Beautifully packaged throughout, it's a fascinating and comprehensive document.

LAMB OF GOD

As The Palaces Burn

www.lamb-of-god.com

Originally intended as a 2012 tour documentary driven by fan-centric stories, early on there are moments of levity: Chris Adler rifles through old photos with humility (that first band photo attempt, wow), rocks a Prius and properly summarises the band's tireless ethos, "Everywhere we could play, we would play." However, the Don Argott-directed film soon takes a hairpin turn to the subject matter of vocalist Randy Blythe's manslaughter case, surrounding the death of a fan at a 2010 concert at Prague's Club Abaton. Having initially left the country, when the band returned to the Czech Republic in 2012, Blythe was detained and the well-documented trial, and eventual acquittal clearly took their toll. Adler's eyes tear up at one point: "You're automatically kind of put into this defensive mode by knowing Randy's in trouble. And at the same time you're trying to balance out the emotion of somebody losing their life at our show." There are brief glimpses of performance footage, albeit not as the focal point of the film. Still, this is not your typical rock biopic. A worthwhile watch.

NIK BARTSCH'S RONIN

Llyria Score

www.nikbaertsch.com/shop

Anyone familiar with Swiss group Ronin knows that their music is rhythmically intricate, featuring odd time signatures, cyclic rhythms and polyrhythms in abundance, with all five members participating in the intertwining rhythmic chicanery. For the listener, however, determining where beat one is can be a challenge or certainly a point for debate, making this book of scores for their third ECM release *Llyria* extremely welcome. It allows the Ronin student to see pianist/composer Nik Bartsch's intentions as he cycles his 5/16 motif through 7/4 on 'Modul 47' or his 11/8 excursions on 'Modul 53' and confirms just how incredible this group is.

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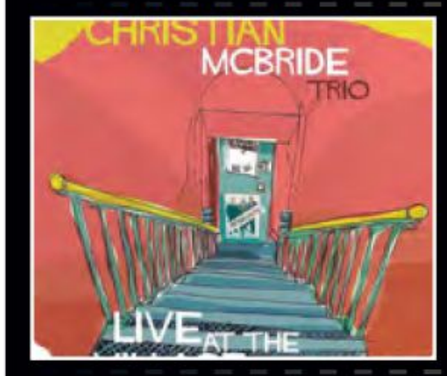
NEW RELEASES

DRUMMER'S RECOMMENDED NEW RELEASES

Corrie Dick – Impossible Things
(Corrie Dick – drums)
www.chaos-collective.com

Marcotulli/Erskine/Danielsson – Trio M/E/D
(Peter Erskine – drums)
www.abeatrecords.com

Michael Wollny – Nachtfahrten
(Eric Schaefer – drums)
www.actmusic.com



Christian McBride Trio – Live At The Village Vanguard
(Ulysses Owens Jr – drums)
www.mackavenue.com

Ibrahim Maalouf – Kalthoum
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http://www.ibrahimmaalouf.com/js_albums/kalthoum

Jaco – Original Soundtrack
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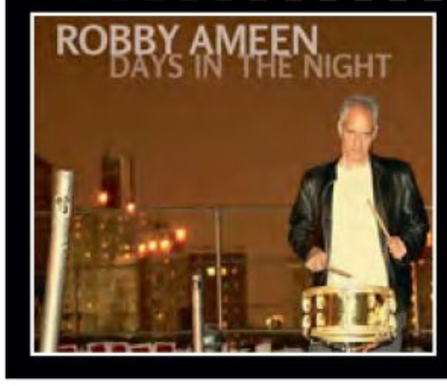

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http://cdbaby.com/cd/robbyameen2

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VINTAGE DRUMS

Legendary sounds

SLINGERLAND HOLLYWOOD ACE SNARE DRUM

BY NICK HOPKIN

This drum has been getting a lot of attention in the shop since it arrived from the USA a few weeks ago; not surprisingly, as it really does sound sweet. The Hollywood Ace model was introduced in 1958 and was manufactured into the late 1970s.

This one in particular is one of the earlier drums built, with the shell date stamped September 4 1958. Slingerland made a move from the solid shell snare drum towards three-ply drums with this model, the catalogue from that period offering three snare drums: a solid shell Radio King (top line), the three-ply Hollywood Ace (mid range) and the three-ply Deluxe student model (budget, six lugs).

The shell consists of mahogany/poplar/mahogany with maple reinforcement rings, eight streamline lugs and a 'Blue Duco' finish. It was also available in pearls and glitters. At this time Slingerland made a move away from the clamshell snare strainer to the Rapid strainer, which for me

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Later models feature Slingerland's stick-saver hoops with the tension rods going through holes in the hoop, but this drum has a nice feature in that it has the older style collar hooks ('belly' style stamped from one piece of metal) to tension the drum's single flanged 'stick chopper' hoops.

It is also notable that this earlier drum has no tone control dampener. Despite its worn appearance, with some flaking and chips to the paintwork, this drum stands out from the crowd.

I fitted the drum with a coated Evans G1 head and a Hazy 300 and replaced the original overstretched wires with a set of PureSound Custom 20 strand wires. It has a really great, classic vintage sound straight off the snare rack; the mahogany gives it a dark warmth but it has plenty of bite from the straight edge hoops.

Tuned low with the snare wires eased off it gives that classic fat snare sound that would suit groove players looking for a shuffle vibe. Tuned higher with the snare wires tighter it gives a lovely bright crisp sound (retaining the darker quality of the mahogany) that would suit jazz and funk.

The response of the drum is great and it is versatile – suiting a variety of different playing styles. We've had this snare drum with a few different kits in the shop, played by drummers with very different styles, and it's always sounded great.

We're encouraging players to come and visit us in out store to try out these great vintage snares. There's only so much you can express about a snare through words and pictures, so if you're looking for a vintage snare drum please do come and see us and try them out for yourself. ●

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To be in with a chance of winning, all you have to do is head over to our website – www.idrummag.com – or fill out the form below and answer this simple question…

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Starr Man

☆

The great Gregg Bissonette has the enviable job of playing drums alongside the most famous drummer on the planet, Ringo Starr. Joel McIver asks him how he does it

Words: Joel McIver **Images:** Richard Ecclestone

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"If you're preventing the words from being heard, you're not doing your job. Check your ego at the door. So many drummers, just want to fill, fill, fill – but songs are about the words and the vocals, not the drums"

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Sometimes you meet a musician who puts you to shame with the sheer energy and commitment to excellence that they pour into the job – and Gregg Bissonette, 56 years old but looking 20 years younger, is one. After a show-stopping set at the London Drum Show at Olympia back in November, and a gruelling flight home to California, he's showing no signs of fatigue. In fact, he's already back at the coalface...

"I'm getting ready to head out for a week's worth of Dixon Drums shows in Colorado, Mississippi and Florida," says Bissonette, grabbing his keys, jumping into his car and switching his cellphone to Bluetooth. "Dixon has been amazing, sending me all around the world. I have some clinics in Germany and Italy before that. Oh, and did you hear about Dave Lee Roth?"

Backtrack for a moment. Rock fans will remember Bissonette's five-year stint with 'DLR', sometime Van Halen singer and then a new solo artist: together with the fast-fingered guitarist and bassist Steve Vai and Billy Sheehan, Bissonette played on Roth's first two albums *Eat 'Em And Smile* (1986), *Skyscraper* (1988), as well as a third Roth album with a different line-up. This troupe of hyper-skilled musicians have long since gone their separate ways – until now.

"The day that I got back from the London Drum Show, the day before Thanksgiving, the whole *Eat 'Em And Smile* band were going to do a show in Hollywood," he says. "It was Steve Vai, Billy Sheehan, Brett Tuggle on keyboards and me – and we found out at the last minute that Dave Lee Roth could make it to the show. We'd already booked Michael Starr from Steel Panther to sing the songs, but he said, 'If Dave shows up I'll just hang out and watch!' So Dave showed up and people freaked – but we didn't actually get to go on stage because the place was so packed out and there was a line down the street, winding around Hollywood. The fire marshalls saw that and said, 'Too many people! You're twice over capacity' and closed the whole thing down.' We're talking right now about finding a much bigger venue and maybe doing the whole *Eat 'Em And Smile* record."

Taxi to Heathrow, please... so does Bissonette have fond memories of playing with Roth? "Oh, yes," he affirms. "That gig came along right after I'd done a tour with [jazz trumpeter] Maynard Ferguson. I felt for sure that Dave would say, 'Ah, you're the drummer with Maynard Ferguson. It's too big band jazz, you're not for us!' But he really liked what I played and it was such a thrill. Everyone in that band has gone on to a full career, doing their own thing. Brett plays in Fleetwood Mac, Billy has done Mr Big and the Winery Dogs, Steve has his solo career and I've gone on to do Ringo Starr, first and foremost. Ringo is the biggest gig I've ever done, but I've also done ELO, James Taylor, Toto and a lot of other bands. I even played at Wembley at the Live Earth show in 2007 with Spinal Tap – in front of 90,000 people!"

So what's it like playing with Ringo Starr? Pretty flawless, it emerges. "Life on the road with Ringo suits me great," says Bissonette. "It's like nothing else; we travel around in what we call Air

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"Sometimes people try and strike a bargain and say, 'Can I have two songs for $300?' and I say no! The music industry is a business, and you have to treat it that way. It just happens that music is my hobby too, and I love it"

Ringo – a private, 11-passenger jet – and we stay in all the finest hotels. But most of all, I get to play with my favourite drummer and my friend. It's a dream. I have a great relationship with him."

Are there any challenges that accompany playing with one of the two remaining Beatles, we wonder? "Not at all," laughs Bissonette. "There are no difficult things with Ringo. Usually when you're on the road with a band, the music might be great and everyone might get along great, but all the travelling gets hard – but this is the best situation I've ever been in. The music is phenomenal; they're all great songs that we play, and we have strategic days off too."

He continues, "I saw the Beatles in Detroit when I was seven, so to play double drums with Ringo, and to have Paul McCartney come out and play with us as a surprise on Ringo's birthday, as he did in 2010... you know how they say, 'be careful what you wish for'? I prayed for years to be Maynard Ferguson's drummer, and to play in a big rock band like Dave Lee Roth's, and to play with Ringo – and all my prayers have been answered. It's unreal!"

Now, you're probably thinking that if you or I had to occupy a drum kit next to Ringo Starr, we'd be a bag of nerves. How does Bissonette approach the gig? "Well, with every song we do, we try to do it like the record," he explains. "Ringo told me that it's not really his thing to do a lot of super-complicated left-hand ghost notes, so I said, 'Why don't you just play a groove and I'll play that stuff?' So that's what happens, and then on the songs that he sang with the Beatles from behind the drums – like 'Boys' – I play exactly what he does. My goal is not to flam with Ringo!"

Bissonette goes on: "For a lot of the songs, we play the same part and we're exactly in sync. For other songs we mix it up; we take turns, we look at each other and we have great eye-contact communication going on. I would never ever jump into a fill when the greatest song drummer of all time is about to play one of his own. We're just respectful of not overplaying. Ringo doesn't read music but he always has lyric sheets. He also plays grooves, like in 'Come Together' and 'Ticket To Ride' and 'Tomorrow Never Knows' – things that make you go 'I know this song!' because it's identifiable by its drum beat."

A good point. Listen to these words of advice, readers: "If you're preventing the words from being heard, you're not doing your job, which is why Ringo is my favourite song drummer. Check your ego at the door. So many drummers, especially in the last 10 years, just want to fill, fill, fill – but songs are about the words and the vocals, not the drums. You're being hired to serve the song."

Bissonette continues: "If you're recording a version of 'Amazing Grace' and doing machine-gun double bass all over it, you're not really serving the song! Don't cover the melody with your drums. Work on your styles, your vocabulary, and your tempo – that's the number one thing. Count off your starting tempo and groove with the metronome for a minute, and then play without it – and at the same time, record yourself on your phone or whatever, and then listen back to how close you are to the metronome. That will help you become a good studio musician."

If anyone knows the truth of these words, Bissonette does, having spent his entire career behind the drum stool – a huge achievement in itself. "I've never had another job!" he chuckles. "My dad was a drummer in a wedding band, and I started drumming for his band when I was

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about 14. What happened was, my parents went on a trip to Spain, which is a long journey from the USA (although you people in the UK can go there for the weekend!) We stayed with my uncle Chuck while they were gone. Before they left, my dad gave me his sticks and said, 'You've got the gig with the band this weekend! Chuck will drive you there and back.' So I played with his band and it was such a great start. I was like, 'Man! You can make such great money doing this.'

"I had a band with my brother Matt [a professional bassist – Ed] in middle school called Grand Circus Park, and we used to play high school and middle school dances. Then in college I put myself through school playing in Top 40 rock and funk bands. It's really all I've ever done. It's a dream! My degree was music education, so I can teach band or at public school, but that was always a backup if I didn't make it through playing, so I never really used it. I graduated college in 1981, so that's 34 years ago. I do use my degree when I do clinics because an education degree teaches you to teach better."

How far ahead is Bissonette booked, we want to know? "Let's see," he ponders. "I just did a month of US and Canada shows with Ringo. I'm MC-ing a Guitar Center drum-off, which is a big event out here in January. So I've got a month and a half booked out. The music business is pretty month to month, actually: you don't get a lot of bookings a year ahead, unless it's a big tour or something. It suits me, though; I really enjoy waking up, looking at my iPhone and seeing what my week looks like. I get calls from producers and engineers, booking agents, my clinic manager, my drum companies, Ringo's people... it really is exciting to know that every day could bring the coolest job you've ever had."

Talking of fun times, Bissonette loved his time at the London Drum Show, he says. "The LDS was so great. I got to see so many friends that I have over in London and all over the UK, so it was great for that reason, and I met a lot of my American friends over there too from the different companies that I endorse. I'm sponsored by Dixon Drums, Zildjian cymbals, Remo drum heads, DW double pedals, Direct Sound headphones and Latin Percussion, which is owned by DW. I wish I could have played longer, though – you only get to play about an hour, and it's never enough. You always want to play longer at these shows!"

He adds: "The LDS is so well put together and so amazing. I do drum shows all over the world, but London is a very prestigious place to be in, so to do one there with all these great drummers was just phenomenal. The guy that runs it is Steve Harvey; what a great guy. He's really gets drummers and knows how to put on a great show. We don't really have a Steve Harvey over here. Maybe he wants to move?"

Does Bissonette record a lot of sessions, and if so, is it as simple as a client dropping him an email? "That's exactly how it's done!" he says. "I've got drums set up, miked up and with an engineer ready to go, and people do it all the time. I have a website, where you can click on a link that says 'Hire Gregg' and you can hire my brother to play bass if you want to. We do a lot of sessions together. You send me the track and wire me the money and I send you back the track, it's real easy!"

How much does he ask, we (perhaps cheekily) want to know? "I charge $200 an hour and I can usually knock out a song in an hour, so just do the math. Sometimes people try and strike a bargain and say, 'Can I have two songs for $300?' and I say no! The music industry is a business, and you have to treat it that way. It just happens that music is my hobby too, and I love it.

"Session work isn't what it was in the 60s," continues Bissonette, "when drummers like Hal Blaine were doing it. Hal would do three three-hour sessions a day, from 9am to noon, 1pm to 4pm and then 5pm to 8pm, and that was six days a week! It's not that way anymore. Drum machines came out in the 80s and you can't really do much about that – but there's still session work and drummers are still working because there's still a demand for live drums, miked up in a studio, thank God."

Will Bissonette share some more of the advice he's learned over the years with *Drummer* readers? Top man that he is, he's happy to do so. "The other advice I like to give drummers is nothing to do with drummers," he says. "It's about what kind of person you are. Be a person that people want to hang out with on a tour bus for a year. If you have a bad attitude, or you complain when you're on a tourbus, it brings everybody down and you'll get fired, or at least not called back. Be somebody that lifts people up. Give people compliments instead of bringing them down. Give people reasons to feel good about themselves. Don't backstab. And try to sing backup vocals, you'll have a much better chance of being in a band, because you're doing two jobs and they don't have to hire a backing singer.

"Even when the tour is having problems, or you're not being paid, or the hotel room is bad, or you're last on the bill, or the food is bad… whatever the problem seems to be, be a bright light in dark places!" Wise words, that man. ●

Info: www.greggbissonette.com

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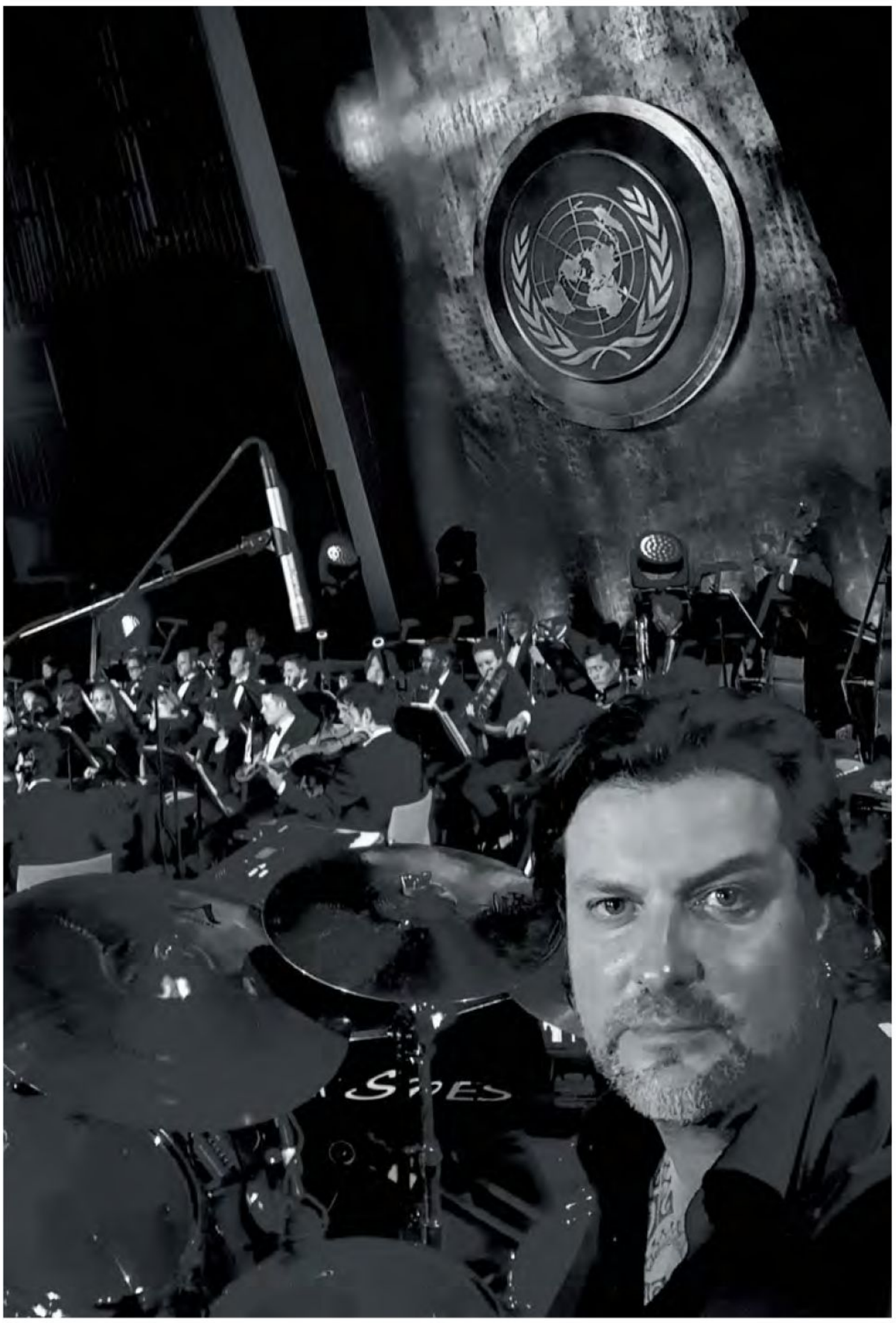
ROBIN **DIMAGGIO**

UNITING NATIONS

He's a drummer, percussionist, conductor, musical director for the United Nations and a philanthropist, but there's even more to Robin DiMaggio than that, as *Drummer* discovers

Words: Alison Richter **Images provided by:** KelleMack PR



Drummer, percussionist, multi-instrumentalist, songwriter, conductor, arranger, producer, engineer, recording artist, touring and studio musician, musical director for the United Nations, fluent in four languages: is there anything that Robin DiMaggio can't do?

"I can't play guitar," he says. "String instruments are super-difficult for me. It just doesn't work."

DiMaggio acknowledges his many skills and impressive CV, but he is refreshingly humble about both. He'll talk about gear, but he's upfront about the fact that drumming is not what defines him, and that being blessed with talent and career longevity isn't about fame and fortune. It's about using those things for a greater purpose – making a difference during his time on Earth; hence his philanthropic efforts, passion for working with the UN and desire to use music as an avenue to unite global populations and bring joy, not to self-serve.

DiMaggio grew up in a musical environment. His father was a conductor for the Paris Symphony, which meant being constantly surrounded by classically trained musicians and developing an early love for their repertoire. Robin DiMaggio began playing drums when he was two-and-a-half years old; at five he began studying piano and music theory under his father's direction. He credits those lessons with training his ear and turning him "from just a drummer to a musical drummer." His proficiency and self-discipline, even as a child, eventually led him to play bass, saxophone and clarinet.

His family relocated to the US when he was an adolescent and with that move came the discovery of pop and rock music. "At 14 or 15 I started getting out of classical and jazz, which was my upbringing, and listening to modern music," he says. "I was trying to figure out 'why is this person playing in straight time?' Four drummers that inspired me growing up were Steve Jordan, Steve Gadd, Jeff Porcaro, and John Bonham. If I could blend those four drummers into one, that's what I would want to be. These four guys are like the gods, in my personal taste. From my heart and my soul, they changed the way I heard music as a young teenager."

He landed his first touring gig at 16, drumming for Tracey Chapman. From there, his career blossomed, recording and touring with an endless A-list of artists including Mariah Carey, David Bowie, Diana Ross, Steve Vai, Dr Dre, Johnny Cash and Paul Simon, with whom he joined his idol, Steve Gadd. He worked in television, performing on *Soul Train*, the MTV Awards, and as house drummer for *Lopez Tonight* with George

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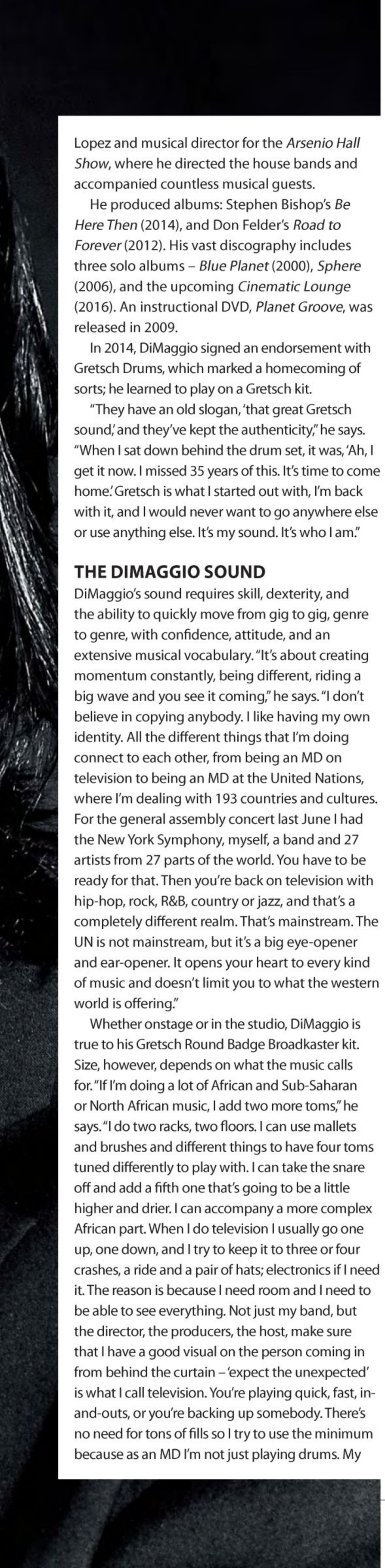

Lopez and musical director for the *Arsenio Hall Show*, where he directed the house bands and accompanied countless musical guests.

He produced albums: Stephen Bishop's *Be Here Then* (2014), and Don Felder's *Road to Forever* (2012). His vast discography includes three solo albums – *Blue Planet* (2000), *Sphere* (2006), and the upcoming *Cinematic Lounge* (2016). An instructional DVD, *Planet Groove*, was released in 2009.

In 2014, DiMaggio signed an endorsement with Gretsch Drums, which marked a homecoming of sorts; he learned to play on a Gretsch kit.

"They have an old slogan, 'that great Gretsch sound,' and they've kept the authenticity," he says. "When I sat down behind the drum set, it was, 'Ah, I get it now. I missed 35 years of this. It's time to come home.' Gretsch is what I started out with, I'm back with it, and I would never want to go anywhere else or use anything else. It's my sound. It's who I am."

THE DIMAGGIO SOUND

DiMaggio's sound requires skill, dexterity, and the ability to quickly move from gig to gig, genre to genre, with confidence, attitude, and an extensive musical vocabulary. "It's about creating momentum constantly, being different, riding a big wave and you see it coming," he says. "I don't believe in copying anybody. I like having my own identity. All the different things that I'm doing connect to each other, from being an MD on television to being an MD at the United Nations, where I'm dealing with 193 countries and cultures. For the general assembly concert last June I had the New York Symphony, myself, a band and 27 artists from 27 parts of the world. You have to be ready for that. Then you're back on television with hip-hop, rock, R&B, country or jazz, and that's a completely different realm. That's mainstream. The UN is not mainstream, but it's a big eye-opener and ear-opener. It opens your heart to every kind of music and doesn't limit you to what the western world is offering."

Whether onstage or in the studio, DiMaggio is true to his Gretsch Round Badge Broadkaster kit. Size, however, depends on what the music calls for. "If I'm doing a lot of African and Sub-Saharan or North African music, I add two more toms," he says. "I do two racks, two floors. I can use mallets and brushes and different things to have four toms tuned differently to play with. I can take the snare off and add a fifth one that's going to be a little higher and drier. I can accompany a more complex African part. When I do television I usually go one up, one down, and I try to keep it to three or four crashes, a ride and a pair of hats; electronics if I need it. The reason is because I need room and I need to be able to see everything. Not just my band, but the director, the producers, the host, make sure that I have a good visual on the person coming in from behind the curtain – 'expect the unexpected' is what I call television. You're playing quick, fast, in-and-outs, or you're backing up somebody. There's no need for tons of fills so I try to use the minimum because as an MD I'm not just playing drums. My eyes are on 40 or 50 people. I have to be able, while I'm playing, to talk to my band, talk to production, and see everything that's happening on the stage."

He also has endorsements with KAT Percussion and Earthworks microphones. "For me, the feel of what the KAT drums do is the best of the best, the best pads out there," he says. "As far as electronics, I'm always about the latest and newest but whatever you're going to program, you should be as comfortable playing it behind a kit. You can program and do things on them that you would not dare to try on an acoustic kit, however, I always try to do whatever I program. Even if it's something odd, I try to do it on my drums."

BACK TO FRONT

When recording, DiMaggio is a stickler for front and back miking. "It's always important to mic the drums in front – your overheads, obviously everything, over the drums," he says, "but for me it's equally important to mic from behind, too, because what I'm hearing from behind the drums is not what you're hearing out front. Let's say I'm playing the drums and I tell you to stand two or three feet behind me and listen, then go around three or four feet in front. You will hear a 100 per cent difference in sounds. So when I have my guys mic it, I always say, 'Make sure you get some overheads, but also get the back of the drums. Take some room mics and put them there to catch the rim stuff. It's really important.' I think Earthworks has created the best drum mics for in the studio and live. They've managed to cross over on both sides, while a lot of companies do one or the other but can't do both. The mics are small, they don't get in your way and the quality is like driving a Mercedes Benz. They are extraordinary microphones."

In addition to his professional responsibilities, DiMaggio is a husband, father and philanthropist, giving his time and talents to organizations such as Fallen Heroes, which raises money to help the families of California police officers and firefighters killed in the line of duty, and Covenant House, which provides services to homeless and runaway children, teens, and young adults. He is in the preliminary stage of planning and developing the first UN School of Art, Culture, and Music in Southern California. In 2015, he partnered with guitarist Joe Satriani for 'Music Without Words', which they wrote and recorded for the 30th annual presidential general assembly of the UN – 69th session gala. The song was digitally released on 4 November 2015 with a portion of proceeds donated to support UNICEF.

DiMaggio guides himself with two mantras. The first one is personal: "Kindness with confidence," he says. "That's a magic key. I've dealt with people who were difficult to work with, or that I was told had big egos, and I always try to manifest a way to break down the barriers. Sometimes the walls they've built are because of massive insecurities. People think that makes them stuck up but really they're not. They're incredible people but you've got to know how to get through to them. When you're working with them it's important to make them feel comfortable. Kindness really works."

The second one pertains to business acumen: "The dream is free, the hustle is not." DiMaggio learned his 'hustle' early on, as a teenager playing in a funk/R&B ensemble in Los Angeles. Despite being underage, he became the band's de facto businessman, negotiating deals with club owners and promoters to book gigs, and learning how to create opportunities. "I figured out how to do it and it made me savvy that business is important and always do it clean," he says. "When there's a little grey, walk away, because it won't end well. It's got to be black and white. Having no business sense means you stay in the garage and enjoy playing as much as you want. Also, if you approach drumming as 'just a drummer,' you've already lost the game. This is my opinion, everyone's is different, but it's the way I've worked all my life. You've got to be in a different standpoint where you can see what no one else is looking at. We're kind of like robots, the shepherd is leading us, and I believe if you get out of line and look everywhere else, you'll see things that no one else is seeing."

STANDING UNITED

In 2009, DiMaggio combined all of these things – kindness, confidence, business sense, talent, opportunity, and philanthropy – to become musical director for the United Nations, a position that he created. While on tour with Paul Simon, DiMaggio met former UN secretary general Kofi Annan, representative for Africa and consult of the UN, backstage at Radio City Music Hall. A conversation ensued regarding music for an upcoming event. DiMaggio requested a meeting for the next day, Annan agreed, and he was impressed with DiMaggio's propositions for redistributing funds to populations in need through revamped event planning and cost management via host countries. "It's extremely important to know that I created [the position of musical director] out of nothing," he says. "It was an opportunity that I saw and I jumped on it at 200 miles an hour with confidence. I sold it to him because I was adamant about what I could bring to the table that no one had figured out yet, or they'd figured it out and hadn't been heard."

Within the role, DiMaggio's many responsibilities include co-ordinating musical guests for the official general assembly summit, held every year in New York. He also works with musical instrument manufacturers to provide instruments for children in need throughout the world. "It's incredible when a C-130 plane is moving 200 peacekeepers to another country to say, 'Can you take 100 violins and 500 violas with you on that plane and disperse them through some of the umbrellas of the UN to these children?' Fresh food and water will determine whether they live or die, but for me to bring music – which is the only thing I'm good at doing – this will bring them something, even if it's harmonicas, that will make them laugh and smile. As simple as it is to us–— we don't care because we're overdone with everything, and whatever we want is in the palm of our hands – to do that is super-powerful and it feels really good." ●

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BUILT FOR SPEED

Motörhead's Mikkey Dee talks to us from the road as the band promotes their 22nd studio album on their 40th anniversary European tour

Words: Jamie Blaine

Images: Chris Bradshaw (taken aboard Motörhead's Motörboat 2015) & Robert John

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Arms flailing, blonde mop flying, attacking his kit with precision, power and breakneck speed – Mikkey Dee's maniacal drum solo is the most immensely enjoyable exhibition we've witnessed since watching Professor Neil Peart systematically bash his way through 'De Slagwerker' on the *Snakes and Arrows* tour.

Born Micael Kiriakos Delaoglou in Gothenburg, Sweden, Mikkey's CV includes stints with Copenhagen glam-rockers Geisha, King Diamond, Don Dokken and – after replacing Phil 'Philthy Animal' Taylor in 1992 – 23 years with Motörhead.

Back on track after a string of cancelled dates due to Lemmy's health crises, we catch up backstage with the gonzo locomotive behind Motörhead's maximum rock and roll as the band promotes their 22nd studio LP, *Bad Magic*.

LET'S START AT THE BEGINNING

Well, I always loved guys like Ian Paice…

EVEN BEFORE THAT – BUDDY RICH

Oh! The way, way back. OK, I'm come from a drum family. My uncle Roland formed a band in Sweden called the Drifters and that's where my drum interest came from. So I was hearing big band and jazz early on, as a little kid.

HOW OLD WERE YOU WHEN YOU STARTED PLAYING?

I think maybe four or five years old? I had a little gold sparkle Sonor four-piece kit that Roland passed down to me. I'm still playing Sonor so I must be the longest time endorser they've ever had.

WHAT RECORDS WERE YOU PLAYING WITH BACK THEN?

I never played to any other music in that way. And I'm glad, really. I was inspired by guys like Ian Paice and Deep Purple's *Made in Japan* and Brian Downey of Thin Lizzy had a huge impact on me so I tried to sound like them, but I never sat and played along with their records. I would start to get little gigs here and there and people would say, "Oh, get Mikkey, he sounds exactly like Ian. Or just like Brian." At the time I thought that was great but then one day I realised, 'I'm not a good drummer! I'm just a copy of my idols.'

WE ALL TRY TO IMITATE OUR IDOLS STARTING OUT THOUGH…

To be inspired by someone is one thing; to try and copy them is no good at all. When I talk to young kids today and they ask how I do a certain fill or beat, I say, "You are asking the wrong question." If as a young boy, I got to sit next to Ian Paice or Brian Downey I would not ask them how they did a certain drum technique. I would ask how did they come up with those techniques. That is more important to me. Anyone can copy licks, what sets you apart is being an originator.

AT WHAT AGE DID YOU START GIGGING?

My first show was at age eight. We only played covers; Hendrix and Cream and Johnny Winter, stuff like that. The other guys in the band were a little older than me. By the time I was 16 I was playing Swedish pop.

LIKE ABBA?

Not so much ABBA… more like Roxette. We played a lot of shows around Sweden, two or three a week. We had our own bus, our own light rig. From that band I moved to Copenhagen and formed Geisha, which was hard rock.

AND THEN YOU JOINED KING DIAMOND?

In 1984, yeah. I was 20! We were youngsters but all good friends. People don't realise how big King Diamond were back then, especially on that *Abigail* tour in '87. It wasn't until we recorded *Them* that we moved over to the US, which unfortunately was the last year I was with them. After that I joined Don Dokken.

WHAT WAS DRUMMING FOR KING DIAMOND LIKE?

At the end of the King Diamond days I felt like such a shitty drummer. When I left King and started jamming more normal rock I had so much stress in my heart – I couldn't keep a beat if my life depended on it. I was used to turnaround beats and doing quarter notes and complicated fills but I couldn't sit down and just rock out. I felt very narrow as a drummer. I was good at what I did with King

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Diamond but what happened to normal music? So when Don Dokken called me, it was perfect. I just wanted to play with a rock band.

WE'VE HEARD YOU TALK ABOUT SQUARE VERSUS ROUND DRUMMERS – EXPLAIN THAT

Just tonight I had dinner with Charlie Benante [drummer, Anthrax] and we were talking about that. Round is a style, a drummer who is very warm and dynamic. And then there are drummers who are fantastic but their style is more 'choppy'. If you see Downey play with Thin Lizzy and watch his right hand – the swing beat he gets on a hi-hat or a ride, you might not really hear it, but you feel it. That's round. Whereas another drummer might play quarter notes over that or a shuffle beat. Brian played shuffle with his feet and his hands and a lot of ghost notes on that snare together with the right. To me, the snare drum is the heart. So round is about warmth where square is more staccato.

WHAT'S YOUR FEELING ON USING A CLICK?

Sometimes it's good, sometimes not. With King Diamond, a lot of fans come up to me still and say, "Ah, Mikkey, when you did *Fatal Portrait, Abigail, Conspiracy* – those records sound so much better." You know what I tell them? It was because I'm such a bad-ass drummer! Then everybody laughs and I tell them the real reason: we did not use click tracks. I recorded every King Diamond record alone on my drums. I sang the music in my head and I put down the best movement that sounds right. If I listen back now I hear that I slow down and I speed up. If I'm supposed to halve the tempo I might overshoot by 10 beats per minute – but you know what? It sounds right and it feels right.

SO HOW DOES A DRUMMER RESIST THE URGE TO RUSH WHEN PLAYING SPEED METAL AND THRASH TEMPOS?

It isn't an option! That's where you spend your time behind the drums, the years it takes to build that foundation. Someone tells me, "Hey, this kid is a great drummer, he's been playing five years." He's not a great drummer yet. Let's see in 20 years, maybe.

LEMMY TOLD US HE PLAYS BASS MORE LIKE A RHYTHM GUITARIST. HOW IS IT PLAYING DRUMS TO LEMMY'S BASS? WHO FOLLOWS WHO?

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GEAR BOX

Drums: *Sonor*
SQ2 Vintage Maple (custom finish)
22″x18″ kick drum
18″x16″ floor tom
16″x16″ floor tom
14″x12″ tom
13″x11″ tom
10″x10″ tom
14″x7.25″ Mikkey Dee signature snare drum

Cymbals: *Paiste Signature*
20″ Power crash x2
19″ Power crash x2
18″ Heavy china
14″ Sound Edge hi-hat
18″ Power crash
18″ Power crash
20″ Heavy china
10″ Splash
22″ Power ride
14″ Thin china
16″ Thin china

Hardware:
Sonor 6000 throne
DW 5000 single chain pedal

Drumheads: *Evans*
Toms: Evans G2 (batter)/G1 (resonant)
Kick drum: Evans Emad
Snare: Evans Heavy Weight

Electronics: *Buttkicker*

Sticks: *Wincents*
Mikkey Dee signature stick

They all follow me, no doubt about it. It took many years to get there, to be honest! They never really listened to Phil Taylor – he was following them more. So I knew I had to put my foot down and take over. When we first started I would sit on a beat and these guys, they would take off or slow down and they could be a whole beat behind. But for a drummer, you can't just walk in and take over, you have to earn your stripes. It's a matter of trust. Once they know you're trustworthy, the band can relax and let the drummer do their job.

YOUR DRUM SOLO IS GETTING GREAT PRESS ON THIS TOUR – *LOUDWIRE* PRAISED YOUR "ROARING SOLO" ON 'DOCTOR ROCK'

I'm actually not a fan of drum solos at all. Personally, I'd rather skip it. For many years with Motörhead I didn't do a solo. But I got so much shit for it: you get shit for doing solos, and shit for not doing them. You read *Kerrang!* and it says, "Oh, the show was incredible until we had to sit through Mikkey Dee's boring drum solo." But comments on mine haven't been too bad. Every now and then you run into a journalist who'd rather hear an old classic than a solo and I understand that too.

HOW DO YOU COME UP WITH THOSE PARTS?

The first thing is this: if you want to do a solo, you've got to play for the whole crowd.

NOT JUST THE DRUMMERS…

Exactly! I can sit there and put together some technical exhibition that would put people falling off their chairs but to the average fan it would sound like some sack of potatoes falling down a flight of wooden stairs. It's so boring to show off. A solo should be entertaining. Every person has rhythm in their body so you have to select parts and techniques that have a little something for everybody. I might move from some Buddy Rich floor and rack tom jungle beats to something that is more for the King Diamond listener with triplets and a combination of kicks and snare. But it has to be for everyone and it has to be intense. I hate this standing up with the bass drum holding a beat and trying to get the crowd to clap over some distorted toms and echo.

Joe Elliot came up to me after a show one night and said, "You know what Mikkey Dee? I hate drum solos!" I didn't know what to say. I'd never met Joe before. Then he said, "But there are two guys I love to hear solos from, that's Neil Peart and you." And I'm like, "OK, thank you very much!"

Drumming is like a sport. You cannot compare swimming with ice hockey. You can both be gold medallists, the best at your particular thing, which is the same with drummers. You can't compare Mikkey Dee with Neil Peart or Peter Criss or Ian Paice. We're all different but gold medallists in our own categories, in our own way. So when you create a solo you don't need to create something that's going to blow away 15 people in a crowd. Sometimes less is more.

WILL MOTÖRHEAD MAKE IT TO THE UK SOON?

Lemmy is doing much, much better now. You know, we hated having to cancel those first few shows but it was either risk Lem getting worse and having to cancel the whole tour or let him get some good rest and be ready to go. So everything is good now and we're enjoying playing a lot of theatres with a really great set-up and sound. We love to get out there and we'll be in the UK in early 2016 with Saxon and Girlschool [TBC]. ●

In November the sad news broke of Phil 'Philthy Animal' Taylor's passing at the age of 61, writes Jamie Blaine. *Phil was the original force behind classic Motörhead albums such as* Iron Fist, Ace of Spades, No Sleep 'Til Hammersmith *and his double kick bass intro on 'Overkill' remains one of the most imitated drum riffs of all time. With his snarling attitude and jackhammer attack, he was a massive influence on all things metal, punk and rock and roll. Taylor will be sorely missed but his legacy will live on as long as there is rock.*

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GEAR BOX

Drums: *Tama*
Starclassic bubinga
20"x18" and 22"x20" kick drums
14"x14" and 16"x16" floor toms
12"x6" tom
10"x6" tom
8"x6" tom
13"x7" and 14"x8" snares

Cymbals: *Zildjian*
13'' Avedis Pocket hi-hats
18'' Efx A custom crash
10'' Efx A custom splash
8'' K custom splash
10'' Oriental china with a 9'' Oriental splash on top (stack)
24'' Prototype Ride
16'' Efx A Custom crash with 6" Avedis splash on top (stack)
20'' Oriental Crash of Doom

Drumheads: *Evans*
Sticks: *Vic Firth*
Hardware and percussion: *Tama*
Electronics: *Roland*
Protection Racket cases
Custom IEMs Co.

A note from Kaz:
I always change my set-up depending on what gig I do, but the kit I used at the LDS was a sound and look I have been trying to come up with for some time now. My cymbals have a combination of dark sounds from Zildjian and experimental sounds, which complement my style of playing in my own music. I tend to use a lot of stacks, which I always get excited about because you can always make endless combinations.

ON THE RIGHT TRACK

Kaz Rodriguez has been building a solid name for himself in the drum world, with the likes of Aaron Spears counting themselves as fans of his funky play-along tracks. *Drummer* spoke to the man himself as he performed at the London Drum Show 2015

Words: Andy Hughes **Images:** Richard Ecclestone

Kaz Rodriguez's start in drumming did not follow the typical pattern – not a drum set in the house of the soon-to-be master drummer but a tabla, the two-drum percussion staple of Hindustani music. Kaz admits to loving the sound of the tabla but being less enamoured with the technical mysteries required to master it. "I was thinking about taking my tabla playing to the next level," Kaz recalls. "But it is such a complicated instrument. I'm not sure I understand its dialect. When I first got a set of drum sticks in my hands that did feel natural and I felt at home, as though this was something I could do well."

As a youngster, busking and saving hard for his first kit, Kaz dreamed of a Tama drum set, like his idol Stewart Copeland. "I remember I had two posters on my wall of my bedroom," Kaz says. "One was a set of Zildjian cymbals and the other was Stewart Copeland playing a Tama kit, and that was why I wanted one. I knew I wanted to grow up and play those drums like he did in the Police."

Kaz's professional career has included a year of touring with Cirque Du Soleil and also working with Jessie Ware, which led to valuable experience playing acoustic and electronic drums. "Personally I enjoy playing a hybrid kit but I know it's not for everyone. I find that Roland and Tama acoustic drums go well together. It's a shame that a lot of acoustic drum set players are wary of electronic drums – I think you should embrace them and treat them as your best friend. When I played with Jessie I used the electronic pads to trigger acoustic drum samples. I think that a lot of musical directors and studio producers like players who can do that so it is a good skill to have."

On the subject of good skills, Kaz is a great believer in a drummer's internal clock. As we all know, playing with a click track is less of a novelty and more of a necessity, certainly if you play studio sessions or if your band has anything beyond the most rudimentary samples or lighting cues. Kaz is happy to share his personal experience

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"I BELIEVE YOU SHOULD NEVER BE A SLAVE TO A CLICK TRACK"

in building an internal clock. "I have always loved electronic loops and I practise a lot by setting up a groove and then playing around it. Often I will set a loop and start to play, then I mute the loop for varying amounts of time and bring it back into my headphones and test if I am still on the beat. My mentor when I was first learning was a guy called Mark Bryant, and he gave me some excellent advice that I still use today. He told me, 'If the audience isn't moving, then you're not grooving.' I think that is a really good point. When I carry out masterclasses or clinics, or even if I am playing a show with a band, I look out into the audience and see if people are moving. If I can see hands tapping or heads nodding then I know I am on the groove and I am doing my job well.

"I believe you should never be a slave to a click track. It is a great tool but that is what it is, a tool for your job, not a master for you to work for. If you are playing a live show and your click goes down you need to be able to not panic and keep that beat going, making sure it is right on the groove. The band are following you and if your timing goes off, theirs will follow. Use a click and enjoy it but never rely on it completely."

Another aspect of Kaz's playing is his belief in versatility, which he views as another important asset for the modern player. "I do think versatility is vital nowadays. If you are a working drummer and you get a call to play a session, or even if you are getting started and a local band calls you up to go and try out with them, you need to be able to say 'yes, I can come down for a jam.' What you do not want to be saying is, 'sorry that's not my style of drumming.' You don't have to adore every style you play but part of being a professional is being able to do the job that is required of you and that is what gets you work. Some drummers are able to be successful at one individual style and they are known for that style alone, but many more players get work by being able to vary their input depending on what is needed. If you are starting out as a drummer, that is not the time to start telling people that you only play one style. That is what you can do when you have a name for a style and you can specialise. If you start saying that when you are first getting gigs your phone is going to be very quiet!"

And of course, starting out means social media, which is where Kaz has built an enviable reputation. "Social media is vital in getting your name out there," Kaz says. "If you can provide your own shop window with your styles it means that people can check you out – and because the audience for things like YouTube and Twitter is so huge, you hugely increase your chances of being heard by someone who is interested in what you do and may want to call you up for some work. You can get excellent advice and feedback as well and it helps to feel part of the drummer community rather than feeling isolated and on your own in your practice room."

Let's talk about kit shopping – always a subject dear to any drummer's heart. "Getting a kit is always a milestone in any drummer's life and it's not something you should rush into quickly. A lot of young players have their eyes on the huge kits that their heroes play but you have to remember that the high-profile players didn't start out with those big kits. They are what come from having a solid name and a reputation. When you are starting out you need to remember that bigger is not always better.

"First of all, when you go into the drum showroom don't shop with your eyes, shop with your ears – that's far more important. It's great if a kit looks nice, but not as important as making sure that it sounds right for you. Sonics are everything. You have to play a lot of kits to find the one that speaks to you – and one will – and that is the one you should be thinking about.

"Drum manufacturers have upped their game so much over the last 15 or 20 years or so. If you go to a prestigious event like the London Drum Show, you will see a huge range of kits but they are all uniformly excellent in terms of design and build. The badly made low-end kits you used to find are almost all gone now so whatever your budget you are going to be able to find something that is built to last. You have to start making your selection based on what sounds right to your ears and feels right when you play it. Work out the kind of kit you want and settle on a name and a model and then start saving for it!"

Finally Kaz what is the most important lesson you have learned as a drummer? "That's simple. It's to be humble. If you are gifted and professional, don't shout about it. Your reputation will get around, people will hear you and see you and the professional opportunities will come. That is the lesson I have learned. I have always enjoyed my time as a session player and a live player and I don't mind that I am at the back because I know my job and I always try to do it well. There is a time for me to come to the front and express how I play my instrument and that is what I am planning for and looking forward to in 2016 Hold back and wait but above all, believe in yourself. If you do those things, the rewards will come to you." ●

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EAMONN MAGUIRE

THE WAKES

The Wakes are a folk rock band from Glasgow whose music covers anti-fascist politics, immigration and unemployment to uprising and rebellion in Scotland, Ireland and beyond. Drummer Eamonn Maguire tells us more…

WHAT DO YOU SOUND LIKE?
We're a folk'n'roll outfit with a lasting taste of the Celtic working class.

HAVE YOU GOT ANY ALBUMS OUT?
Our third and latest album *The Red and the Green* has just been released by Drakkar Records. It's definitely my favourite work so far. If you love groove, fills and a deep kick drum, go get it.

UPCOMING/RECENT TOUR/GIG DATES?
We're just back from a tour of Germany and are going again soon, supporting Slime.

WHO/WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO TAKE UP DRUMMING?
My dad, who is an excellent drummer and guitarist. He helped me buy my first kit and put up with me battering my school books until then. My uncle Mark also gave me a loan of his kit for years, which gave me the foundation to grow up building technique and, more importantly, confidence to take it to the next level. I'm so grateful to both of them.

CURRENT SET-UP?
I'm keeping it simple with a four-piece Premier Genista series in black and a 14"x5" Natal hand-hammered snare, Zildjian cymbals (14" New Beat hi-hats, 14" and 15" A Custom crashes, 20" Sweet ride), Pearl Eliminator series pedals, DW hardware and Vic Firth 5As.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE VENUE YOU'VE PLAYED AT?
Easy! Esperanza, Schwäbisch Gmünd. I've been lucky enough to play some great venues but Esperanza is absolutely mental; intimate but crazy, loud and such an amazing sound.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE ALBUM OF ALL TIME?
Not so easy! I'm listening to a range of music now but can't get *Stanley Road* by Paul Weller off my playlists. It's so diverse and technical from a drumming perspective.

WHAT'S THE BEST GIG YOU'VE EVER SEEN?
Springsteen at Hampden Park, Glasgow; it was four hours solid and it felt like he'd played 30 minutes. I learned so much from one night.

WHICH DRUMMERS, PAST OR PRESENT, INSPIRE YOU THE MOST?
I've always been a big Steve White fan, but Coleman, Royster, Weckl and Lang are just untouchable. So good and controlled, they don't look like they're even trying!

RINGO STARR, CHARLIE WATTS OR KEITH MOON?
Imagine you rolled them into one? Charlie for me – all about the groove. ●

THE WAKES ARE:

Eamonn – drums
Paul – guitar and vocals
Chris – bass and vocals
Fingers – harmonica
Danny – whistles
Conor – banjo and mandolin

The Wakes on the Tube...
http://bit.ly/1XtvrO8

Jason McGerr | DEATH CAB FOR CUTIE

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HAPPY BIRTHDAY DRUMMER

We celebrate 150 issues of the magazine by hearing from past and present contributors, guests and editors

Gemma Hill
(editor, 2014-present)

"My favourite interview was one that I did for our special edition bookazine in the summer of 2015. The phone rang at my house and a warm voice at the other end said, 'Hi Gemma, this is Vic Firth calling. You wanted to interview me?' I couldn't believe it – I'd sent an email to the Vic Firth team about it but I never imagined Vic would call me himself, like we were old friends. He was so relaxed, charming and to the point. I think that may have been the last interview he did so I feel very honoured to have had that time with him and I'll never forget the shock of that moment when I realised who it was on the other end of the phone."

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▶ Jules Tabberer-Stewart (editor, 2010-2012)

"I remember doing the Chad Smith interview for the 100th edition and Tina K, our photographer, Jay Lewington from Sabian and I went to the O2 Arena to do the interview. We were told to go to one area to pick up the passes so we went there. Then we were told that we shouldn't be there, we should be at the stage entrance, which is right around on the other side. We went there and they sent us back again. When we got there they told us they had spoken to someone at the other end and it was now OK so we went back again. This was all while lugging heavy photography gear and lights. When we went back again they told us we couldn't go through the door to the backstage area so we went all the way back and I had a meltdown with the woman at reception. I told her we were texting Chad's drum tech and we needed to get there quickly. They finally let us through and Chad said to me 'Are we doing this interview or not because you've only got about three minutes now?' This was after we'd had an hour and a half scheduled. But it happened, we did the interview, we got the photos and it was all OK. I just remember the stress of getting there early, walking about five miles and then being under pressure to get the interview!"

▶ Richard 'Eckie' Ecclestone (photographer)

"The Drummer Live weekend of 2008 was a tad wild. *Drummer* designer Richard Page and I came up with the idea of comping everyone together that was playing at the show in the style of Reservoir Dogs. So I bought a couple of suits from a charity shop, one big and one smaller, and forewarned everyone what was happening in the hope that they would all go for it. Amusingly, not everyone fitted in the suits and Jason Bonham had to hold the trousers up as he walked along. Josh Devine was about 15 at the time and even the smaller suit was way too big for him but everyone was game and it all came together. I wasn't sure how I was going to go about asking Chad Smith to get into a 10 quid suit but he turned up straight from Savile Row where he'd bought a suit especially for the shoot!

"Another mental moment from that session was when I asked Chad to pretend to cut off Ray Mayorga's ear with a drumstick to which Chad, being a force of nature, said, "I'm not using a drum stick, we need a knife!" We sent out the word and one soon arrived from the nearest kitchen. I can still hear Chad shouting at me as I egged the pair on while Ray pretended to be – and, judging by the slight bit of blood at the end, probably actually was – in a bit of pain. Still it was a bunch of fun!"

▶ Matt Smith (designer, 2013-present)

"As designer of *Drummer* most of my memories come from being stuck in the office, late on deadline day, sifting through a multitude of almost-but-not identical images of drummers for the cover, and then deciding on a cool and interesting font that we haven't used before. When they do let me out of the office, it's to film the London Drum Show, which is a great chance to meet the people you've been staring at and Photoshopping on the screen for years. One performance that sticks in the mind was Aaron Spears, in 2012; an energetic, powerful display that had the crowd on their feet cheering. The only problem came afterwards when I arrived at the sound desk to find that the sound recording had corrupted and we had to use the rough audio from the camera... if anyone wants me, I'll be back behind my desk."

▶ Jules Tabberer-Stewart & Samantha Slater

Jules: "One of the nicest things about working on *Drummer* is the people that you meet through it who are genuinely nice"

Samantha: "It's like a strange extended family, and even though Jules and I worked on *Drummer* a year apart and never at the same time, we would have liked to have worked on it together. The magazine may have been awful but we would have had a great time!"

▶ James Hester (*Drummer* tutor)

"I've worked on Drummer for longer than I can actually remember – I think I joined in around 2007. I did a transcription of Arctic Monkeys' 'I Bet You Look Good On The Dance Floor' and interviewed my good mate Jason Bowld to begin with. I've met and interviewed many of my heroes since then and graced the pages many times as a performer too, which have all been huge honours for me. I've had so much fun over the years. To some degree there's an element of 'what happens on tour stays on tour', but my greatest memories are from Download and Sonisphere (especially the year I played there) hanging out with Jules, Sammi, Tina and Owen and usually Dean and Tracy from Protection Racket, and of course trying to grab interviews with all and sundry, using our contacts to get the inside track and basically work and play hard! What I love about *Drummer* is the guerilla mentality of the way we work; we stop at nothing to get the interview and have tons of fun along the way. Happy birthday, *Drummer*!"

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▶ Tina K (photographer)

"Working for *Drummer* and with drummers has been a lot of hard work sometimes but I am not afraid of tricky situations so it has been a lot of fun too. Drummers in general are great, easy and relaxed to work with. Maybe it is true that as drummers are at the back of the stage, they don't get as much attention as other members of the band and appreciate it more. I have met amazing people, both artists and fellow workers in *Drummer*, gained invaluable experiences and developed many friendships.

"I have a book coming out next year with more stories but if I have to pick one job that I will remember forever, it probably has to be with Lars Ulrich during Metallica's World Magnetic tour in 2009. On the first date of the European tour I was in Nottingham to do two shoots, one for Drummer and another one for Zildjian's Z3 campaign. I was given five minutes for each shoot. "Great, just great" I thought sarcastically, but both shoots turned out perfectly. As a cherry on the top, the *Drummer* crew had a few drinks with him and most of Metallica that night. He later called me his favourite Finn. Mind you, I'm not sure how many other Finns he knows!"

▶ Samantha Slater (editor, 2007-2009)

"Owen Hopkin was one of our main writers and he went to interview Charlie Watts for the cover. Owen is from Wales and said 'Hello Charlie. Thanks for being with us.' He was a bit nervous because Charlie Watts is a big deal and he was maybe feeling the pressure. Charlie apparently eyeballed him and said, 'Well if I'd known you were Welsh...' and started to get up. Owen panicked and then realised it was a joke. Apparently they got on famously after that."

▶ Jules Tabberer-Stewart

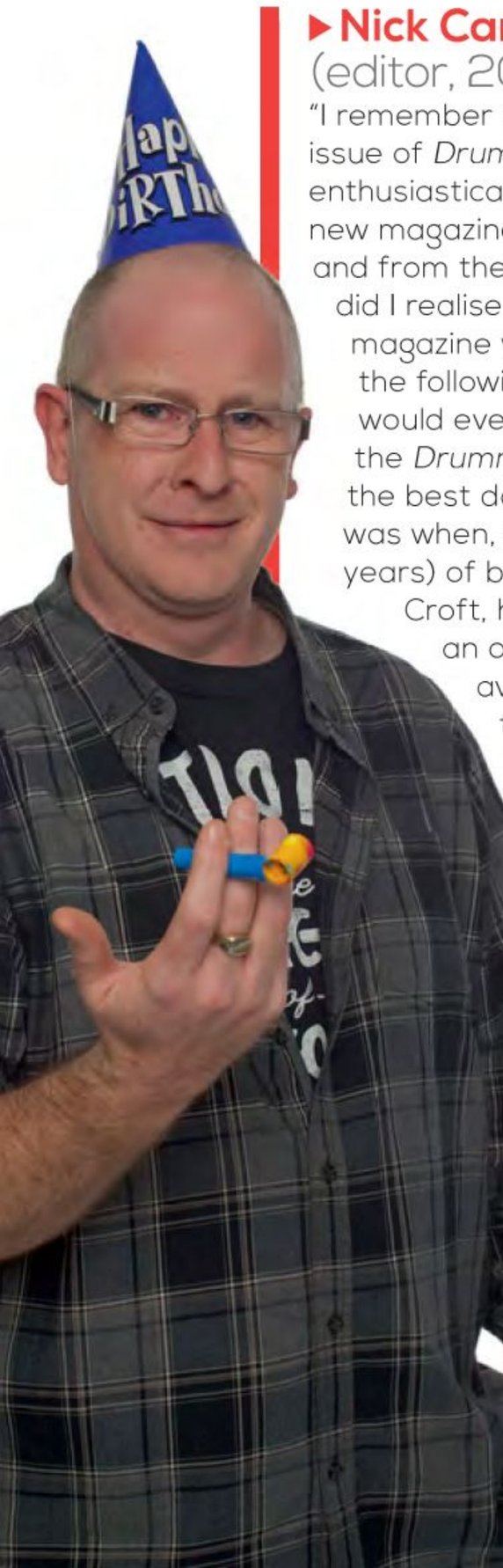
"I recall getting an email from a drummer who'd appeared on the cover of the mag along the lines of 'How dare you use my image on the cover of your magazine when I look like death! You've gone out of your way to make me look bad. Haven't you heard of a thing called Photoshop? I'm going to sue you.' I wasn't even working on the mag when he appeared on the cover! It's not always easy being editor."

▶ Mike Dolbear

"Happy birthday, *Drummer* mag! 150 issues... keep up the good work!"

▶ Gemma Hill

"The team that works on *Drummer* is exceptional but people don't necessarily see the effort, creativity and professionalism that they put into the magazine behind the scenes each month. From the contributors to the team at Blaze Publishing and the well known drummers who are so keen and helpful in sending me ideas and giving their support and time, it's a special group of people who are involved and I feel very privileged to work with them. Happy 150th, *Drummer*... here's to many more"



▶ Nick Carter (editor, 2012-2014)

"I remember picking up the first ever issue of *Drummer* after a friend enthusiastically told me all about a fresh new magazine that he had spotted, and from then on I was hooked. Little did I realise what a huge part the magazine would play in my life over the following years, and what role I would eventually end up taking within the *Drummer* family. Easily one of the best days of my career to date was when, after months (probably years) of badgering the editor Ian Croft, he called me to say that an opportunity had become available to write a regular tuition column. To then progress from there to eventually steering the *Drummer* ship as editor is something that I'm not only immensely proud of, but thankful for the opportunity of working with such a passionate bunch of talented contributors. Happy birthday, *Drummer* – long may you continue!"

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DIXON A SOUND CHOICE

THE LONDON DRUM SHOW 2015

With main stage performances all weekend, the new education zone and lots to see in the exhibitors' hall, the London Drum Show was packed full of everything drum-related that you could wish for. Read on for a full report

Where: Olympia, London **When:** 21 & 22 November

Words: Dave Major, Mark Youll, Iain Goodall & Gemma Hill **Images:** Richard Ecclestone

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MAIN STAGE

SATURDAY

PETE CATER

The opening act was slated to be Harvey Mason – the session legend known for his work with Herbie Hancock in the 70s – but unfortunately a fall at home meant he was unable to fly over from the USA, and so a last minute super sub was required. That man was Pete Cater, renowned big band drummer and teacher. He kicked off proceedings with a short introduction and a tasteful solo. Pete played melodically with some of the Buddy-isms that he has become famous for, and he demonstrated great speed around his fantastic looking kit.

ANIKA NILLES

Anika has shot to fame for her excellent YouTube videos so it was good to see her exceptional and powerful playing in the flesh. She kicked off by playing three original songs with barely a breath between them, showing strong, clear ideas and points of improvisation.

Anika let her music do much of her talking, which worked really well in the big theatre. She concentrated on playing songs and then took some questions on improvisation and groupings. It was great to see her live and if she is performing near you then we highly recommend you go and see her in action.

THOMAS PRIDGEN

Thomas was so keen to get on the stage and start playing that his performance actually started five minutes early – which meant he was playing as the crowd was filtering into the main auditorium. It was a flowing performance with tracks. Once the first track was done, Thomas moved to the front of the stage and began to converse freely with the crowd. The conversation spanned a wide variety of topics, with the core message being to stay motivated and learn all styles – solid advice for drummers of all ages and abilities.

PETE RAY BIGGIN

To finish the day was UK drumming superstar Pete Ray Biggin, famous for playing with Amy Winehouse and now Level 42, as well as his own band PB Underground. Level 42 bass legend Mark King joined Pete on stage and they ran through some classic tracks from the Level 42 repetoire. After some Q&A they delivered a showstopping finale, which saw both Pete and Mark – who began his musical career as a drummer – play a Latin-inspired drum duet. A great all-round performance and a memorable way to round off day one.

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MAIN STAGE

SUNDAY

PETER ERSKINE

Getting the main stage off to a fantastic start on Sunday morning was the great Peter Erskine. While others would have been heading off to morning mass, the congregated drummers were worshipping at the altar of sublime taste courtesy of the Weather Report man. Peter spoke about simplicity at the kit, phrasing and the power of the quarter note pulse. Exquisitely demoing all this over a sassy, sax-heavy jazz track, he also delivered an inspired samba solo to the shake of some left-foot cabassa before closing with a reading of Tchaikovsky's 'Waltz of the Flowers' on brushes, bringing the whole audience to its feet.

MIKE JOHNSTON

Mike's set on the main stage focused on instruction, stressing the significance of accents and demonstrating just how "far down the rabbit hole" we should go to get the most from a groove. Flaunting phenomenal stick technique and some killer single kick work throughout – though especially on his closing solo – it was this tireless tutor's commitment to the crowd that confirmed him as one of the most inspirational and talked-about attractions of the weekend.If you left the main stage feeling uninspired after Mike's performance we can only assume that you must have been asleep!

FRANKLIN VANDERBILT

Into the afternoon, and the breakneck beats and thundering solos from US giant Franklin Vanderbilt detonated so loudly that the quiet chat with Pink Floyd's Nick Mason and Karl Brazil's session on playing pop, which took place either side of his set in the Mike Dolbear Masterclass suite, couldn't have been better timed. Franklin is a gracious and humble speaker, who answered as many questions as he possibly could from the audience. His quick-witted and thorough answers on all aspects of his playing will have earned him many new fans.

GREGG BISSONETTE

Opening his set with amusing anecdotes and a positive 'play over practice' message, the master drummer and clinician dug his heels into hard-hitting tracks from his new album before dazzling everyone with his enormous versatility, playing over a montage of celebrated drum tracks. Here he rocked to the Foo Fighters, slung a hi-hat hot reggae beat around the Police and swung in three over the Andy Williams festive fave 'It's The Most Wonderful Time Of The Year', the title to the latter summing up the opinion of all that attended this wonderful bash, smiling as they left sore-eared but content.

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MIKE DOLBEAR MASTERCLASS SUITE

Education Zone

This year the education zone created a third stage space with performances from Thunder Duo (Gabor Dornyei and Kornel Horvath), Mike Johnston, Anika Nilles, Adam Markó and a Remo Drum Head Tuning with the Pros session with Jeff Davenport and special guests.

Alesis and Roland provided e-kits for the zone and free drum lessons took place throughout the weekend, which were carried out by Trinity College London's expert tutors. We asked Trinity to let us know how the weekend had been for them: "Trinity was thrilled to be at London Drum Show 2015 for its fifth year. Thanks to everyone who visited the Trinity stand and especially to the 200 students who took part in the lessons with Toby Davies, George Double, Tom Gregory, James Sedge, and JJ Wheeler. It was by far our biggest, loudest and most successful show yet! Special thanks to our partners at Roland and Alesis for supplying the kits, to Vic Firth for the sticks, and to Wembley Music Centre for handling our book sales".

Jules Tabberer-Stewart, European drum product manager for Roland, said: "It was a great weekend for Roland. We met lots of drummers, experienced to beginners, who got to try out our V-Drums kits and play our Hybrid kit. The Roland team at the show were drummers too so we loved a weekend of drum talk with other drummers!"

Exhibitors

There was an exciting mix of major and smaller brands at the show this year with companies and products coming from countries all over the world such as Turkey, Italy and Israel. With so much to see (and try out) there was something for everyone, and we suspect a lot of Christmas lists were added to…

Ian Aguado-Bush, product manager of Headstock Dsitribution, said: "This year's London Drum Show was one of the best I've experienced, either as a delegate or an exhibitor. We were lucky enough to have some of the top people from all our brands with us at the show and they have all commented how great the weekend was. We are very much looking forward to next year when we can launch another host of new innovations from Zildjian, Tama and Schlagwerk. See you there!"

We most definitely will.

Kick-starting events this year was the LCCM Beefeaters drum line who performed a well-rehearsed and choreographed routine. The line-up consisted of three bass drum players, four marching snare drummers and three sets of concert-toms, whose interplay was clever, inventive and visually impressive. With bass drums pounding out syncopated cross-rhythms and the blur of rolling concert-toms skilfully interweaving in and out of the crisp unison snare lines, along with stick-tricks a plenty, they helped to set a high standard for the rest of the weekend.

KAZ RODRIGUEZ

Up next was Kaz Rodriguez, current drummer for Jessie Ware. Using a hybrid mix of acoustic drums and an electronic set-up, he played along to his self-penned fusion backing tracks, which have been used before in previous London Drum Shows by none other than Aaron Spears. His kit set-up hinted at his fondness for expressing new sounds, particularly his 'trashy' sounding cymbal combinations which allow him to produce the white noise sound that he favours. He expertly demonstrated tracks like 'City' from his third album, and the ferociously fast and furious 'Portal', which featured a frantic drum and bass groove punctuated with high-speed gospel fills.

EUAN LESLIE

Winner of Mike Dolbear's Young Drummer of the Year 2015, Euan Leslie might have been nervous for his first major drum clinic but this 16 year old showed plenty of confidence as he launched into a fusion track featuring a 7/8 time signature. Throughout the set, his drumming was mature and enjoyable to watch, with a great mix of styles from fusion, blues shuffles, and old school soul. Donny Hathaway's 1979 'Back Together Again' had Euan laying down a solid disco groove, demonstrating his passion for the older musical styles. His solos were full of clever phrasing and great technique and it was no surprise to anyone in the room that he had claimed the Young Drummer of the Year title. We expect we'll be hearing much more from this talented young lad in the coming years.

IAN THOMAS

Fresh off the back of the Mark Knopfler tour, Ian Thomas was joined by two other giants of the UK music scene, pianist Gareth Williams and bassist Lawrence Cottle. Starting with their version of 'Think Before You Think' by jazz drummer Bill Stewart, Ian tastefully demonstrated rolling left hand triplets, accompanied by an immaculate swing feel on the ride cymbal. Switching to brushes for the jazz waltz ballad 'Summer Night', which he dedicated to the late Vic Firth, he stated the importance of learning the melody and the structure of a tune. Surprisingly, Ian talked about how nervous he gets before he plays and that we should expect to be nervous and then just learn to deal with it. He said that it takes a lot of courage to get up and play, but that there was one simple solution: "Have the courage!"

To finish the set, the trio played Juan Tizol's 'Caravan', which featured a time signature of nine and some great soloing from all three musicians.

KARL BRAZIL

Having just finished three years touring with Robbie Williams, Karl Brazil was in great form and full of confidence. Indulging us with as many tracks as he could fit into the time, it was an impressive set, full of as many snare drum changes as there were songs. Playing tracks from Take That, Jason Mraz, Feeder and Robbie Williams, he talked about the discipline of maintaining the groove. Karl demonstrated what makes him so in demand as a drummer by effortlessly switching styles from funk, to pop, to rock, and then big band swing, which he confessed was not his forte, but with his swinging floor tom to Robbie William's 'Soda Pop', echoing that of Gene Krupa's 'Sing, Sing, Sing', Karl proved to be 'King of the Swingers' as well.

NICK MASON

It was a packed room for the interview with Nick Mason, who was very keen to point out the business side of being in a band. With the landscape in music changing all the time, he warned us, "Don't give it away. Don't sign all your rights away in return for an advance." As well as the serious advice there were lots of humorous moments, especially when talking about the many Pink Floyd cover bands, noticing, "They're so good that they can reproduce every mistake I've ever made." As for those who have split for musical differences, he said, "You would have thought they would have seen it coming," which got a big laugh from the room.

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Drum Tech Diaries

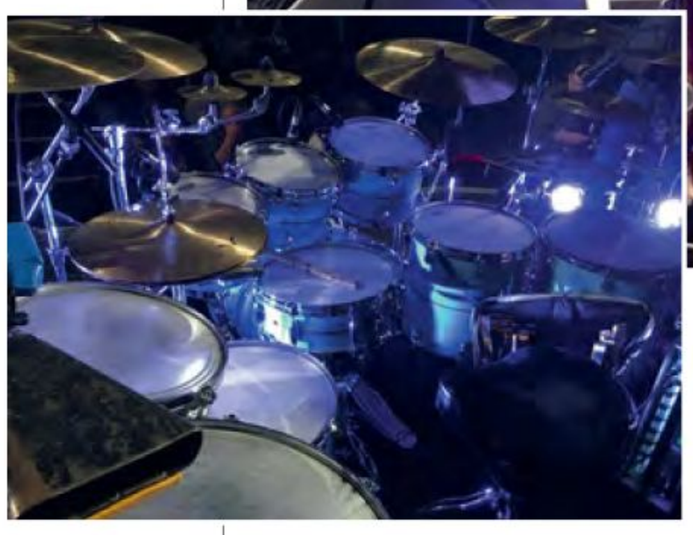
© Tina K

London Drum Show 2015

The view from behind the stage curtain…

The London Drum Show 2015 was arguably the biggest and best it has ever been, with crowds in their thousands eager to view drums and accessories from a large number of exhibitors. This coupled with the live performance areas of the main stage, education zone and Mike Dolbear room meant that there was something for everyone throughout the whole weekend.

My LDS started months before the actual event with discussions about artists, specs, riders, tech requirements, PA lists and the like. As you can imagine, it takes a lot of planning to ensure that the show weekend goes smoothly… and it very nearly didn't!



I was on tour with Rudimental up until the Saturday morning of the show and luckily I was in Amsterdam on a day off when I received the phone call telling me that one of the artists on the main stage was unable to make it. Unfortunately, Harvey Mason had suffered an injury and was unable to fly to London for the show. This happened on the Wednesday, leaving us 72 hours to solve the problem, which was that we ideally needed a London based drummer with all their own equipment, who wasn't on tour and who was able to deliver a main stage clinic performance. After a brief period of discussion the list had been whittled down to two names, and by Thursday at noon we had our artist: Pete Cater.

Pete was a great choice for many reasons, but logistically it meant that we could rest easy as Pete is a consummate professional with everything ready to perform a gig of this nature. Arrangements were made and Pete's set up time was scheduled for early on the Saturday morning.

Upon arrival on Saturday I was pleased to see the stage had been set and prepped by my dep, Dan Norris. In many ways, the Friday is the most important day in regards of planning and preparation. By show opening on Saturday morning we had three of the four kits set and ready on risers for the artists, with Pete Ray Biggin arriving at noon to begin his set up.

As expected, Pete Cater delivered a masterclass in the art of teaching, technique and control through the medium of big band drumming. After his performance we quickly moved his riser backstage and reset the stage for Anika Nilles, whose performance at the show was highly anticipated. Taking it all in her stride she sound checked in good time and waited for her start time. During this time Pete Ray Biggin's team were now assembling his kit on Pete Cater's vacant riser.

Anika gave a thrilling performance to a packed house. Many of the audience would have only seen her on her successful YouTube channel and she received a rapturous reception at the end of her set. Once she was finished we moved her riser backstage and cleared it quickly to allow the recently arrived Peter Erskine to begin setting up for his performance slot of show opener on Sunday morning.

Thomas Pridgen's riser was in position and set. He then rushed through his sound check as he was delayed in his arrival. What happened next was an LDS first – rather than Thomas vacating the stage as normal, he requested a vocal mic and proceeded to greet the incoming audience and began his clinic. A million beats and broken sticks later and he was done. Riser off, we then changed the staging at the last minute due to a request from Pete Ray Biggin – rather than use a riser, Pete's kit would be set on the floor, the same level as his show partner, Mark King.

Their show was pumping; a mix of solo drums, drums to track and finishing with a drum and bass extravaganza. Performances done, all that was left was to get Pete and Mark's gear off stage and set the riser for Peter Erskine so that we were ready for Sunday. As we left on Saturday evening we had Peter Erskine's kit in position, Mike Johnston's kit set on a riser, Franklin Vanderbilt's kit on the riser ready for him to set and Gregg Bissonette's safe in the storage area.

The morning after the night before – survival Sunday. After a night of high jinx and japery it's always good to know that we were well prepped and far ahead of ourselves. Roll on next year… ●

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LET IT BEEB

A campaign to protect BBC music services

Every musician in the UK will interact with the BBC at some point in their career. The BBC is the single biggest employer of MU members. Almost 100 per cent of adults watch or listen to the BBC every day. Two-thirds of adults listen to BBC radio. It is a global phenomenon, home to Doctor Who, Later with Jools Holland and the Olympics.

But our BBC is under threat. Earlier this year the government released a green paper outlining its questions about the BBC. These questions suggest that they want to reduce the BBC's funding or see it significantly downsized. The effect on British culture – and British music in particular – would be nothing short of catastrophic.

The BBC employs over 400 musicians on permanent contracts and hundreds more freelancers across its five orchestras. The BBC hires writers and composers to create those iconic moments. It gives us the Proms, and brings Glastonbury into our homes.

It's not just about the music the BBC creates, it's about the music it brings us. Our BBC is home to Radio 1, Radio 2, Radio 3, 6 Music, Radio 1 Xtra and the Asian Network, which between them serve up every genre and style of music imaginable, from pop to country to Bhangra music. Jaz Dhami said cuts to the BBC Asian Network would "will kill the UK Desi scene."

These platforms create opportunities for emerging artists and give us access to music legends from Zane Lowe interviewing Rick Rubin and Jay Z to countless iconic Live Lounge performances. Royalties from radio broadcasts provide an essential income stream. Crucially, the diversity of music played on BBC radio means that musicians who aren't household names can make a living.

As musicians and music fans ourselves, we listen to the BBC. That's why we're supporting #LetItBeeb.

#LETITBEEB

#LetItBeeb is calling on the government to protect BBC music services. It's supported by the Musicians' Union as well as the wider music industry including record labels, managers and artists such as Sir Paul McCartney, Brian Eno, Annie Lennox, Sting, Jake Bugg, James Bay, Coldplay, Jessie Ware and many more.

We've already exceeded 10,000 signatures, our first milestone. Now the goal is 100,000 so we can get a debate in Parliament on this – essential to persuade decision makers that BBC music services matter.

Sign the petition via theMU.org/campaign. ●

GET INVOLVED

As musicians and music fans we have a duty to fight for our BBC. Sting got it right when he described the BBC and its music output as "one of the reasons I am proud to be British. It has been our most successful nationalised industry, our most potent export, belongs to the people as a whole, and must remain so." For more information on this, or any other issue you may have as a musician, please get in touch via theMU.org.

The Musicians' Union has been protecting the rights and interests of working musicians for over a hundred years, and 30,000 professional and student musicians currently benefit from the MU's comprehensive range of services. These include career and business advice, rights protection, free instrument insurance, free contract and partnership advice, £10 million public liability cover, legal advice and assistance, plus access to a network of musicians of all ages across the UK. For anyone serious about being a working musician, whether in the live arena, in the recording world, as a teacher or writer/composer, the MU gives musicians a voice – individually and collectively – to help nurture and improve the industry and to ensure that every member has the support and protection they need.

More info: www.theMU.org. Follow on Twitter: @WeAreTheMU.

Musicians' Union

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Photo by Dave Hughes

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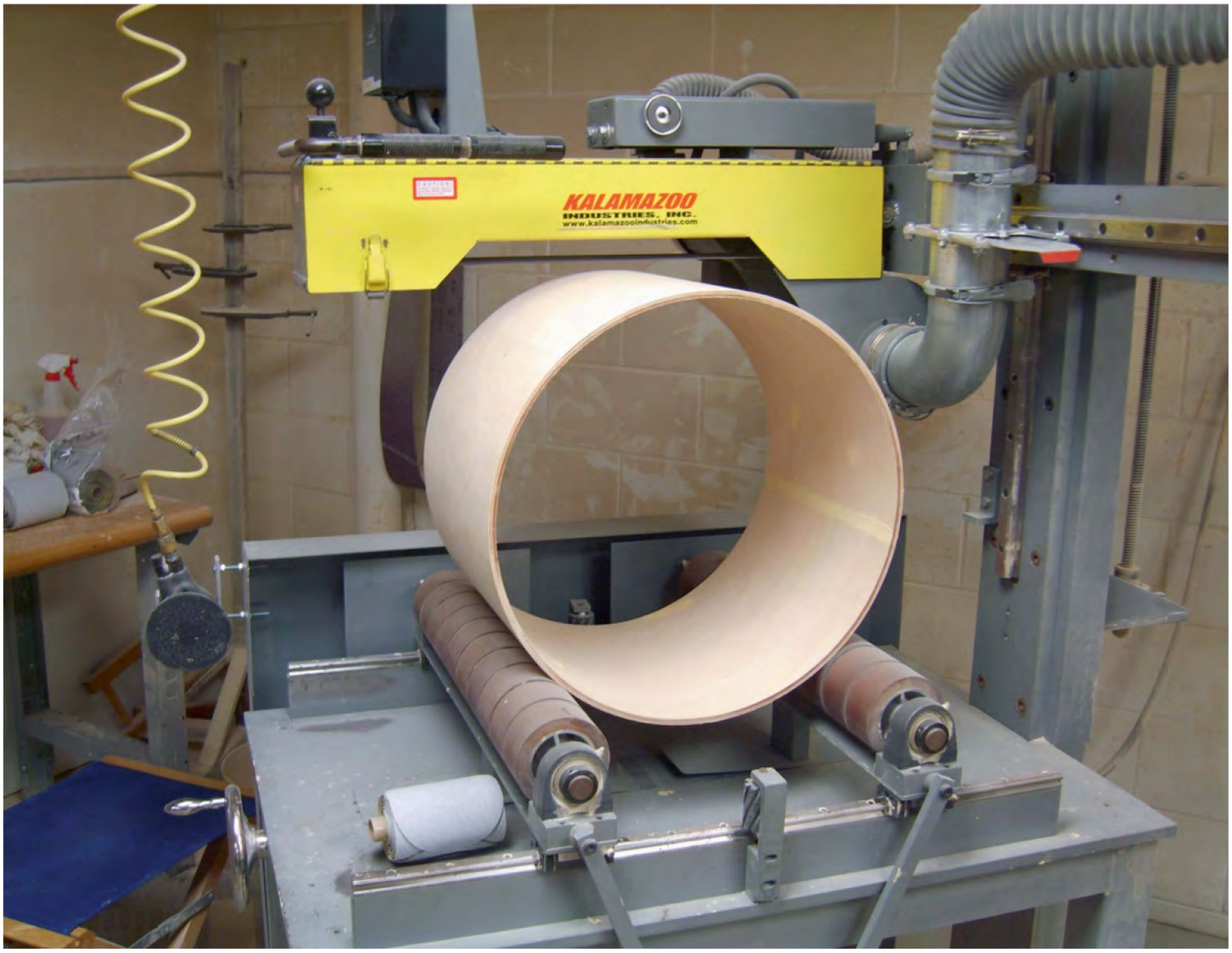


GRETSCH DRUMS TODAY PART II

Rick Van Horn sees how Gretsch shells are prepared, sanded, stained and finished

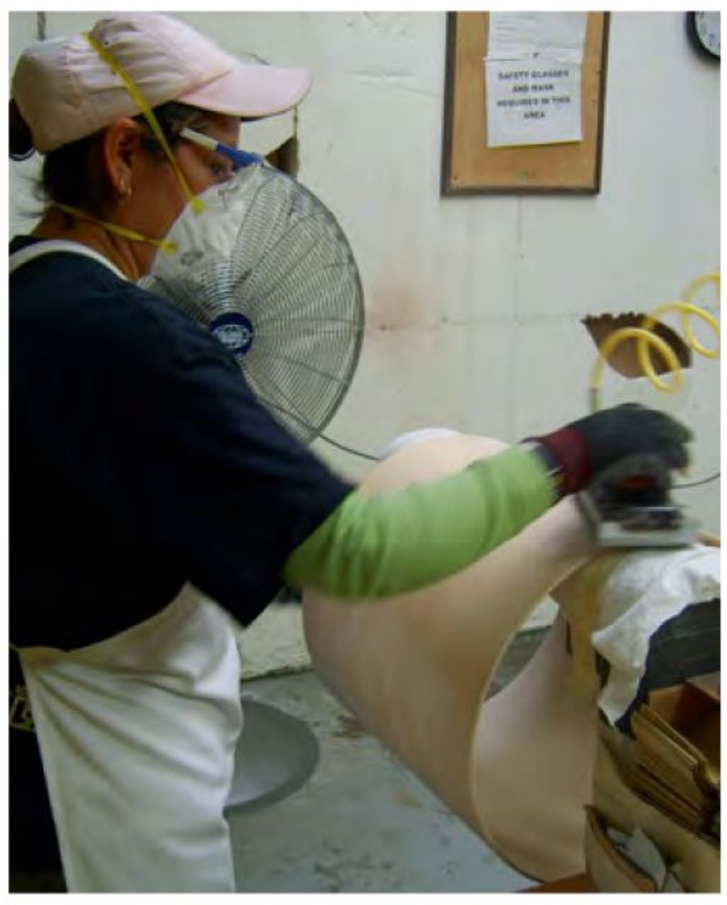
In our November issue, Rick Van Horn began a factory tour of Gretsch in South Carolina, USA. This month he sees how the drum shells are prepared and finished and gets a look at how the top secret Gretsch Silver Sealer is applied…

PREPARING THE SHELLS

The drums in any drum kit order move from department to department on a metal cart called a 'traveler'. On this cart is a packet with details of every manufacturing step to be applied. "We always have the original order going along with the traveler," says Paul Cooper, director of operations. "This ensures that any custom finish options or special drilling are clearly detailed for all of our production people."

The first step in making drums is to cut the shells to the proper lengths for an order. "That's just a matter of lining them up to the proper position on our saw," says Paul. "But after that's done we have to prepare the shell for finishing, which involves quite a few sanding steps. We start by using what's called a balloon sander on the insides of the shells. When that's done, we move the drums to different machines to sand the outsides. On our newest sanding machines the shell is spun on rollers, and the operator pulls down an arm that presses a belt sander against the shell to control the amount of sanding pressure. Every piece of wood is different, and some shells might require more or less sanding than others."

'Sanding' sounds like a simple process but it isn't if you want a shell worthy of a Gretsch stain or painted finish. "We start out sanding on the belt sander with 100-grit sandpaper," says Paul. "Then we remove the drum and treat



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the outer seam with filler. When that dries we sand it off with an orbital sander. Then we go back to the belt sander with 150-grit and then we hand-sand on a drum sander. With a difficult solid colour we may go to 220-grit. We average 25 to 30 shells a day through the sanding operation."

That doesn't sound like a lot of output. Why not save time by having the shell manufacturer supply the shells pre-sanded? Paul replies, "If I were to have my shells pre-sanded and get rid of my sanding equipment, what happens if a shell's not sanded right? I'm stuck. To have a drum with a high-quality finish on it, you really want to control your sanding operation."

GETTING TO THE FINISH

Gretsch drums are almost as highly regarded for their lustrous stained-wood finishes as they are for their distinctive sound. And those finishes are all created by skilled artists in a painstaking process.

"Our staining is done very old school," Paul says. "We wipe it on and wipe it off by hand. Before we hit the full-strength stain we'll do a 50 per cent wash coat to see if there are any problems with the sanding of the drum. If there are, we send it back to be re-sanded. After that we apply full-strength grain-penetrating stain, in anywhere from four to nine coats depending on the colour and the characteristics of the wood on a given shell. One might need four coats and another six coats to get to the same final colour. That's where the experience and artistry of the operator comes into play; judging how much stain to use on each individual shell to make sure that all the drums on that kit look alike."

Stained shells receive a coat of vinyl sealant to lock in the colour. Then they get sprayed with the nitrocellulose lacquer that's been a feature of Gretsch kits virtually forever. "We heat the lacquer to 130 degrees before spraying," explains Paul. "This eliminates the need for any additives to maintain its viscosity, so we can spray straight nitro. That way we get more lacquer on the drum, put less pollution into the atmosphere, and have fewer chemicals to evaporate so the drying time is shortened a little. Best of all, it gives us a great-looking finish. Our satin lacquer is the same as our clear; it just has a waxing agent added to dull it down a bit."

A gloss drum will get a minimum of six coats of lacquer; a satin finish will get a minimum of four coats. "Typically we'll spray on a coat and let it dry overnight," says Paul. "Then we'll do another coat and let it dry overnight. Then we'll sand with a very fine-grit sandpaper. This is necessary because the coats of nitrocellulose that we spray are very thick and heavy."

A gloss drum takes between 10 days and three weeks to get through the staining/finishing process. Then it will dry for one to three weeks before moving to the next step. This time is necessary to let the lacquer settle in and the solvents evaporate out.

Once a gloss drum has dried it goes through a wet-sanding process, employing first 500- and then 1000-grit sandpaper, in a solution of water and ivory soap. "It's gotta be ivory, man," insists Paul, with a laugh.

In addition to Gretsch's famous stained-wood finishes, the spray shop also creates solid finishes, including piano white, piano black, gold mist, silver mist, sea-foam green, and the legendary Tony Williams yellow. Custom colours are also an option, thanks to a paint supplier that Paul says is "great about coming up with special colours for custom orders. I'm just now working on a kit with an all-grey satin finish that's going to look beautiful!"

GOT YOU COVERED

Not all Gretsch drums are stained or painted. Some feature the company's famous Nitron covered finishes. The covering material is made in the USA by the industry's leading manufacturer. Among the 60-plus choices are a wide variety of marine pearls, sparkles, and fades, along with special finishes reminiscent of those popular in past eras.

To cover a drum, the material is first cut to size, and then spread with glue, as is the shell to be covered. When the glue is properly set, the material is pressure-rolled onto the shell. It's a simple process, but it must be done very carefully to ensure that the material is firmly and smoothly affixed.

KEEPING A SECRET

Although we saw the secret process of applying the legendary Gretsch Silver Sealer to the interiors of the shells, we swore not to tell. We were, however, told that the process provides the interiors with an acoustic character that's critical to 'that Great Gretsch sound.' In other words, definitely more than 'just a coat of paint.' ●

Next time: The future for Gretsch drums

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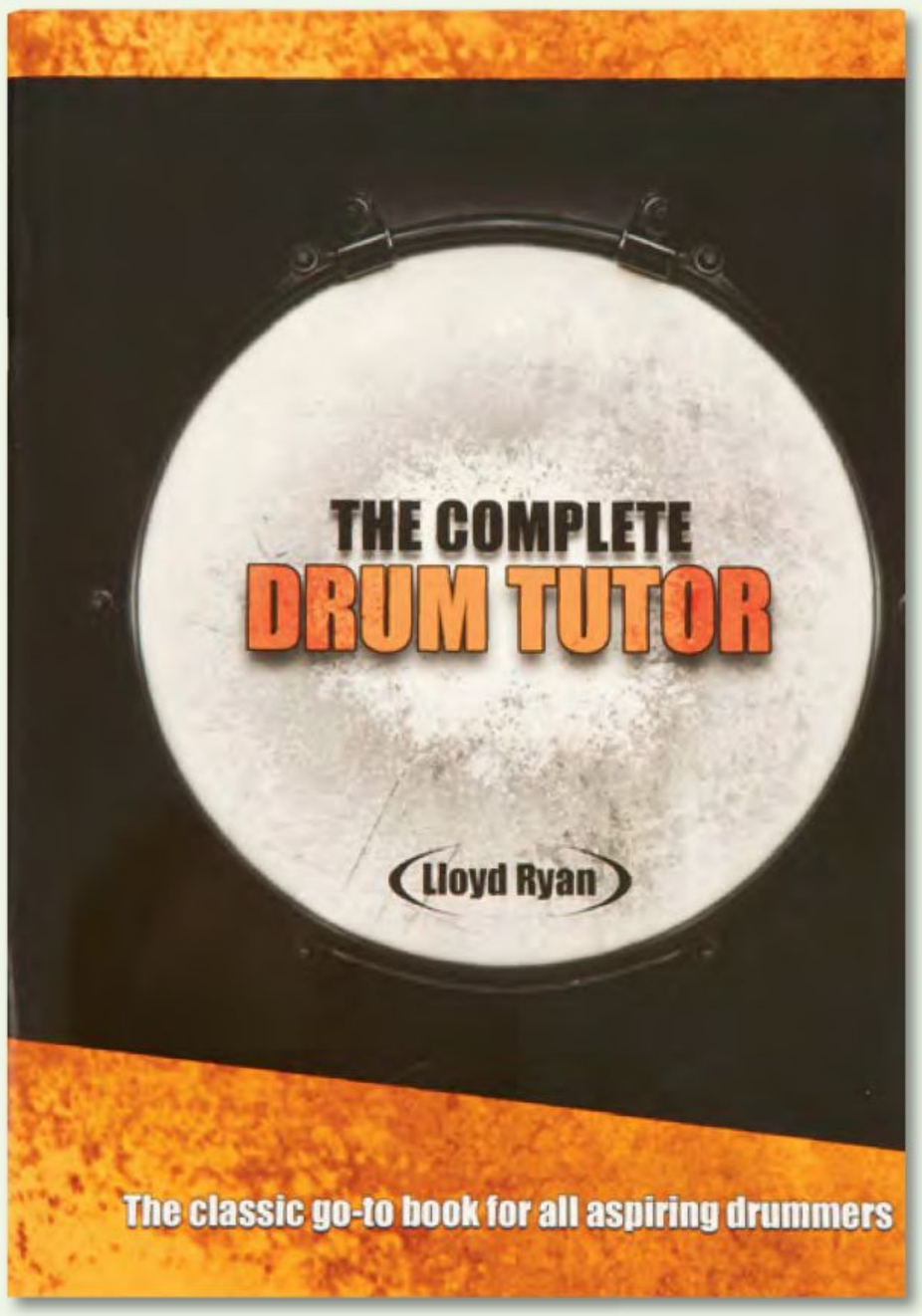

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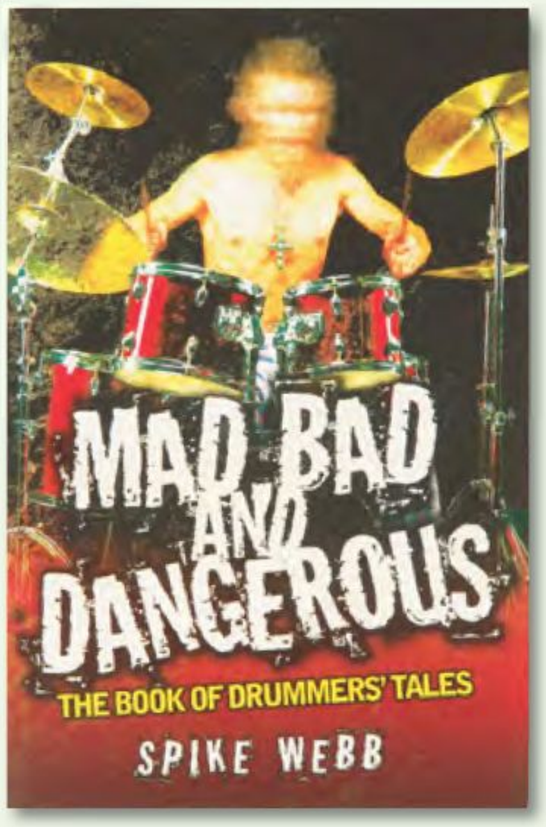

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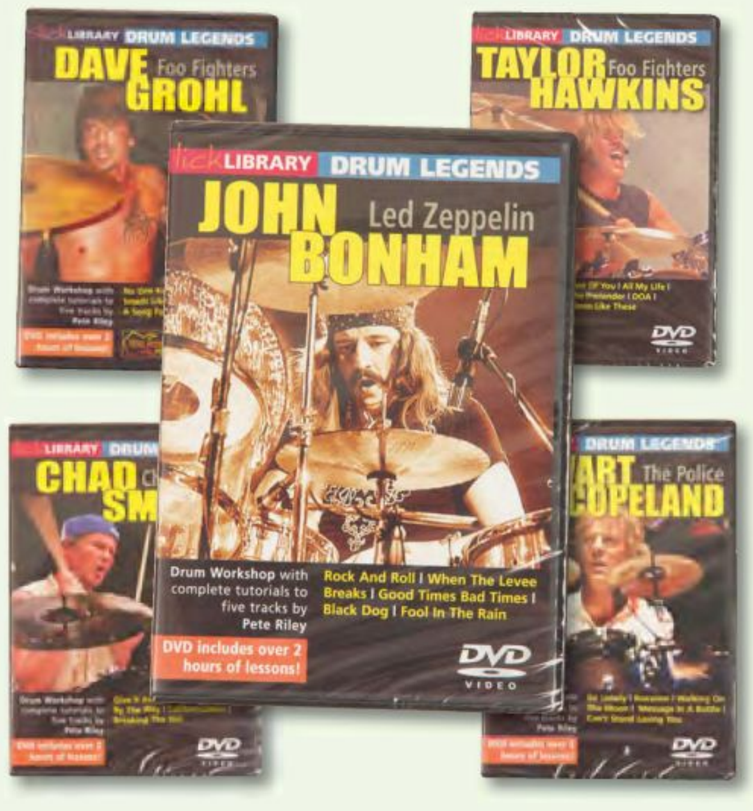

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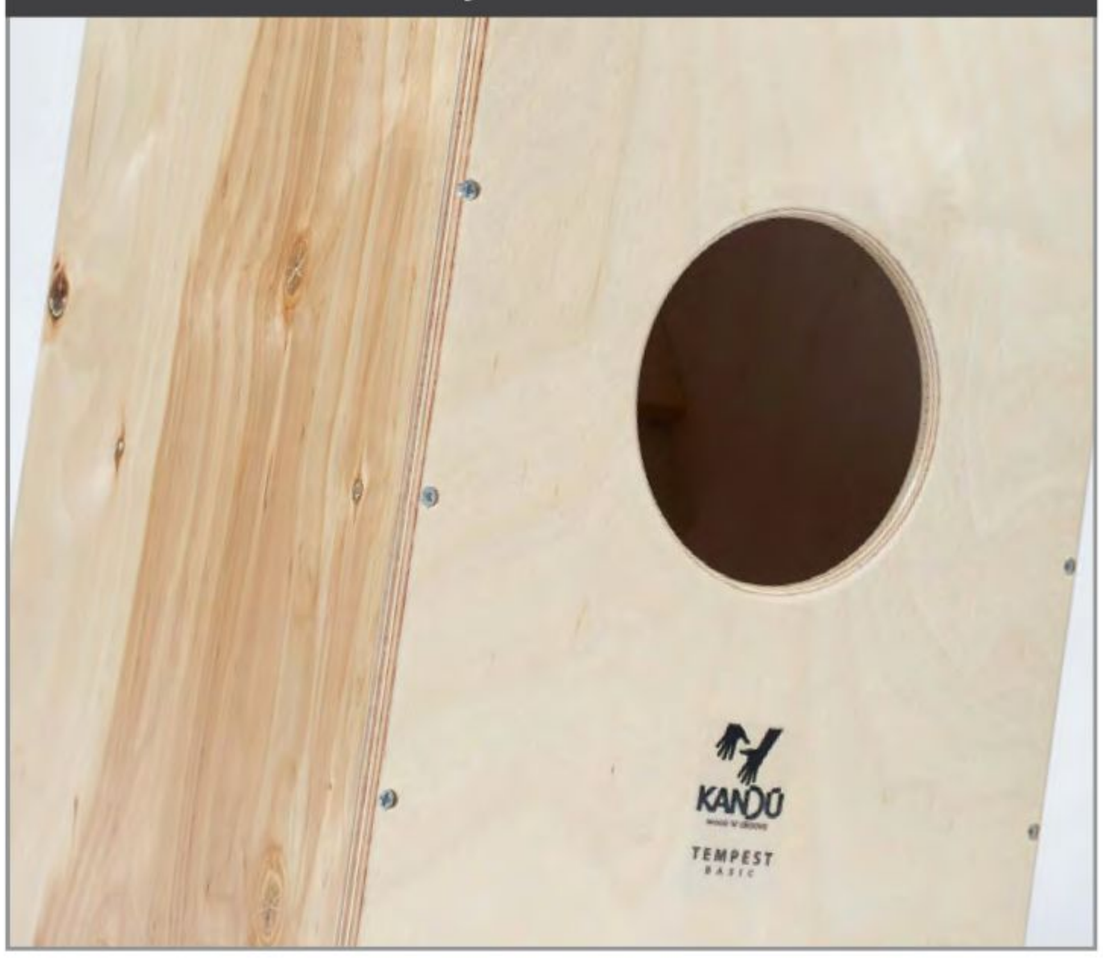


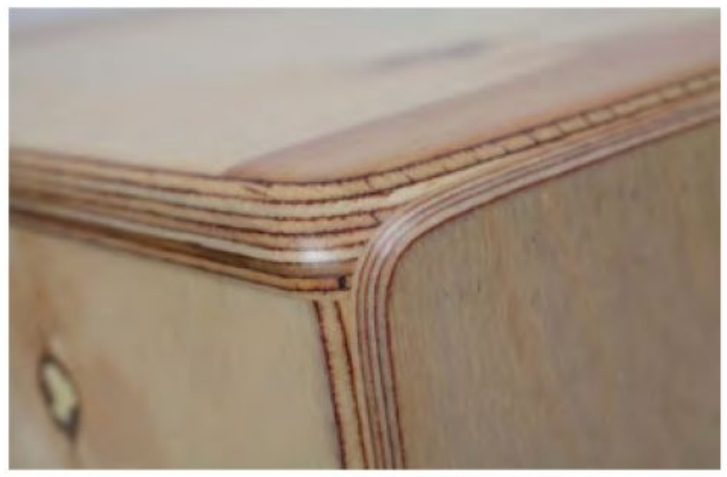
68 Ahead Armor Deluxe cymbal cases

70 Murat Diril Renaissance Brilliant cymbals

Pricing: We quote RRP prices in all our reviews, but we recommend that you shop around and visit your local drum retailer for best 'street' prices on all products featured

74 ProLogix practice pads

76 Natal Original Series maple kit



KANDŪ CAJÓNS

Price

Tempest Basic Cajón £148

Contact

Kandū Cajóns

0208 144 6855

www.kanducajons.com

KANDŪ TEMPEST BASIC CAJÓN

Whipping up a storm with a 'back to basics' cajón

Words: Tom Voce **Images:** Richard Ecclestone

We reviewed a Kandū cajón a few issues ago and we were impressed by its build quality, sound and overall feel. That box had many brilliant features: adjustable feet, adjustable bass, rounded edges, thick walls. We know Kandū can do top end cajóns with all the features pro musicians want, but how will they fare in the lower price range, and what has to be sacrificed to keep the cost affordable?

IN DETAIL

This box is from the Tempest line and has a pair of double width snares that lean against the panel at an angle. This set-up supposedly favours dynamic playing with defined snare response at low volumes, yet I've played many boxes with similar snare set-ups and rarely found them to be very reactive – in some cases they just didn't work. Not so with the Tempest. The snare pressure is right, the definition between clear bass and short sizzly snare is excellent, especially during quiet passages in the music. But at any volume, the snare definitely works, giving me faith in this way of snaring once more.

IN USE

There are three models in the Tempest line, and this is the Basic. Sitting on it and playing it, it's hard to tell which it is because the build quality, smoothness and sound on this model are given as much attention as on all their cajóns. The way to tell you have a Basic is that it's got a natural wood finish, not one-of-a-kind hand-sprayed like the Wild model, and it's without the bass-EQing inner invention of the Varrytone. It has fixed rubber rather than adjustable feet, but the walls are just as thick as on the other models and the quality of basic materials is the same.

CONCLUSION

This is a great cajón and as an entry level instrument it's one of the best – certainly the most comfortable and full of character. Another thing to be certain of is that whichever price level they're aiming for, Kandū won't compromise on quality. ●

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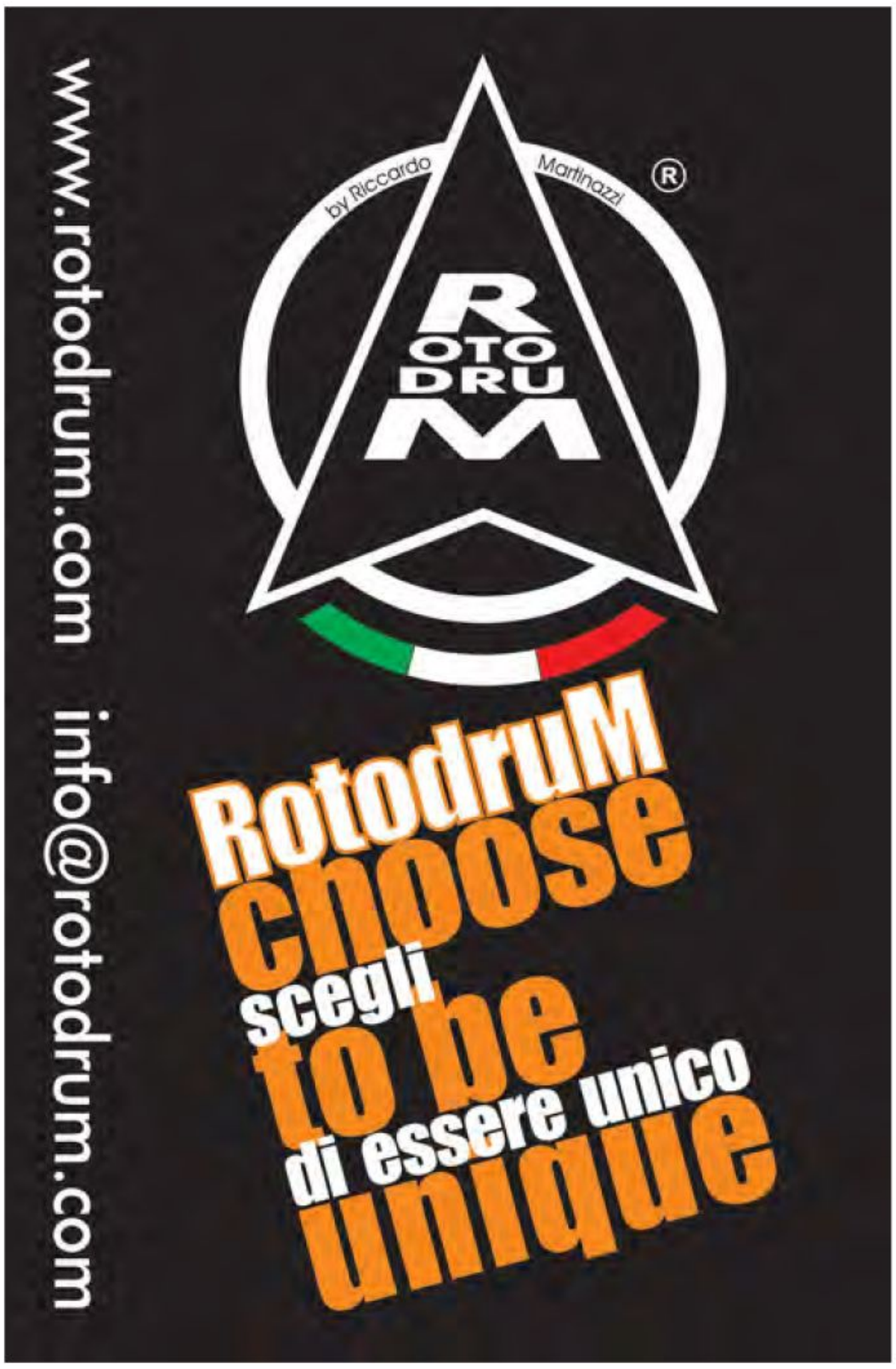

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AHEAD ARMOR DELUXE CYMBAL CASES

Ahead and shoulders above the rest

Words: Andy Ward **Images:** Richard Ecclestone

Let's face it, cymbals are, or should be, the biggest investment we make while putting together our drum kit. If you're fortunate enough to be able to buy good quality cymbals then it stands to reason you would want to protect them, and in today's market decent bags are readily available at prices to suit all pockets.

Ahead is an established and well regarded company that produces quality products for drummers and percussionists. Let's check out two new cases from the company's Deluxe range: the Deluxe Heavy Duty cymbal case and the Cymbal Silo.

AHEAD ARMOR DELUXE CYMBAL CASES

Price
Deluxe Heavy Duty Cymbal Case £160
Cymbal Silo £135

Contact
BR Distribution
01207 282806
www.brdistribution.co.uk

IN DETAIL AND IN USE

Both products will house eight cymbals up to 24" and feature front pockets that can contain cymbals up to 15" – great news for lovers of those 70s style 15" hats. If you are going to build something that lasts then a solid foundation is paramount, which is exactly what Ahead has done here. Using their trademark DX-CORE construction material, each case has two layers of high impact foam with an integral stiffness. The cymbal dividers in each compartment have premium grade sherpa fleece lining, which is plush and gives maximum cushioning.

The Deluxe Heavy Duty Cymbal Case is extremely robust and definitely designed for the air traveller as it features a welcome carry system, similar to that on an upmarket toughened suitcase. It will comfortably carry four 24" cymbals with dividers, and also takes four cymbals up to 15" diameter in the front pocket. There is the option of a carry strap for lighter loads, but given its retractable and extendable handle, it's worthy of heavier loads. This means it can trundle nicely behind you on its heftily constructed base wheels.

The Cymbal Silo has three carrying options, the first being the traditional handle, which is well cushioned and sturdy. The second is a shoulder strap, which goes diagonally across the case from front to back and is also sturdy and padded. The third option is a well constructed waist band, which clips together, is fully adjustable and tucks away too. This is combined with some quite incredible shoulder straps, which tuck away in the rear back panel and very cleverly hook onto the waist strap.

CONCLUSION

Everything about these cases screams quality. They have been built to endure the rigours of travelling and gigging; of course, when you consider the weight you may carry in them then they would need to be. There are some top names who favour the Ahead Armor cases, one being Thomas Lang, and you can see why. These cases are not low in price but you are paying for the protection of an expensive part of your set-up. Case closed! ●

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MURAT DIRIL RENAISSANCE BRILLIANT CYMBALS

Cymbals that look as good as they sound

Words: Victor Guillamon

Images: Richard Ecclestone

Murat Diril is a Turkish cymbal maker who has over 12 years of background working with experienced cymbal makers Meinl and Paiste. In 2006, Diril decided to take his expertise to market with cymbals adorned with his own name. The Murat Diril cymbal brand was born to much critical acclaim, with top drummers and industry specialists shouting their praises, including Harvey Mason who has a signature range within the brand.

IN DETAIL AND IN USE

All of the Murat Diril cymbals are made in a different way to any other brand at the moment; they are heated with wood allowing the alloys to bond in a more elastic way. Each cymbal then undergoes three lots of hammering and lathing. It's claimed that due to the flexibility of the cymbals they are more durable. So in an ever increasing, competitive and sometimes confusing cymbal market, where do these cymbals sit? The Renaissance range exists in the following series: Regular, Light, Dark, Heavy, Fast, FX and the Brilliant series, which we are reviewing here.

The look and feel of the cymbals lives up to the range's name; they are finished to a really high standard and while I appreciate it should be about

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MURAT DIRIL RENAISSANCE BRILLIANT CYMBALS

Price

14" hi-hats £279.99

16" crash £179.99

18" crash £209.99

20" ride £249.99

Contact

Strings and Things Ltd

01273 440442

www.muratdiril.com

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what they sound like rather than how they look, we are in an age of buying with our eyes as well as our ears.

The 14″ hi-hats respond well in many different styles. They are bright but have a solid tone, even when played quietly, which is a surprise as that's not usually a characteristic of brilliant cymbals. There is a good clarity in sound when played with doubles and when half open they sound big – it's a sound that would cut through any live situation.

The 16″ and 18″ crashes sounded just as I imagined they would. My preferred cymbal out of the two was the 18″, which was big sounding but with the added solid tone that was seen with the hi-hats. These would be perfect for any complaining guitarists remarking on how noisy cymbals are; they possess a medium decay and although bright they sound extremely controlled.

On to the 20″ ride – a cymbal with a lot of ping and cut, which would sit well with funk and rock but also has wonderful crash abilities – it's actually one of the best cymbals I've heard that caters for both crash and ride properties. It gives a clear stick response from both the bell and cymbal itself, with bright attack. By contrast, it possesses the wash of a good larger crash cymbal, so although labelled as a ride cymbal, check it out if you want an extra crash option in your set-up.

"THE 20" RIDE IS ONE OF THE BEST CYMBALS I'VE HEARD THAT CATERS FOR BOTH CRASH AND RIDE PROPERTIES"

CONCLUSION

For the stereotypical cymbal set-up these do a great job overall and it would be interesting to see how some of the bigger crashes from the series fare. Check out the Murat Diril website for information on the range of cymbals. ●

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www.muratdiril.com

PROLOGIX PRACTICE PADS

Durable and responsive practice pads that encourage you to reach for the brushes? Sounds good…

Words: Andy Ward **Images:** Richard Ecclestone

A practice pad is a practice pad, isn't it? We get out of it what we put into it, agreed? There are many pads on the market and there's a size and shape to suit everyone. However, ProLogix has produced something quite special here, covering many bases that have been, up until now, overlooked.

"Good is in the detail," Neil Peart once quoted in one of his instructional DVDs. Here is a drummer who is methodical in his drumming ethos, who seems to notice those obscure little details often invisible to the mortal eye. Russ Miller, I suspect, is like minded, and his years of consummate studio experience have surely been invaluable in putting forward ideas for the practice pad that bears his name. And, we have to say, the Russ Miller All-N-1 pad is a piece of sheer magic.

IN DETAIL

The 13" All-N-1 pad has everything a practice pad should have: recessed ports for your snare drum stand claws, the 'Red Storm' playing surface that replicates the realistic response of an actual snare head, an insertable 'Blue Lightning' cushioned pad for that tom feel and finally, the cherry on the cake, an insertable coated plastic head for brush work. Genius! Put all these elements together with an integral plastic rim and it covers all your playing needs in one beautiful package.

Aside from the Russ Miller 13" pad there are options in other sizes: the Blue Lightning 12", Red Storm 10" and the two 6"pads in both options. The Red Storm 6" pad features a screw thread fitting underneath for cymbal stand attachment. The grip zone on its base means the pad does not budge, even when played with attitude. The Red Storm playing surface is a 5mm deep rubber compound on top of a spongy black absorption material that is 3mm in depth. This makes all the difference when playing on it compared to the 6" Combo Pad where the red surface is just mounted onto wood. Flip the Combo Pad over to its Blue Lightning side and you will find a slightly thicker surface compared to its 10" version.

PROLOGIX PRACTICE PADS

Price

13" All-N-1 Russ Miller Pad £60
10" Blue Lightning pad £45
10" Red Storm pad £40
6" Combo pad £29
6" Storm pad £26

Contact

Soar Valley Music
0116 230 4926
www.soarvalleymusic.co.uk

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IN USE

The Red Storm is responsive and allows for stick articulation and speed demands. The Blue Lightning pad is more cushioned and strangely alluring to play. It is quiet and I had to work a little harder with my rudiments in terms of rebound but, being a drumming nerd, I loved the discipline. Whipping out my brushes, I was able to go through the motions at ease and with the truest feel of a coated head – no more excuses for not practising brushwork. Because of the integral rim I was also able to attempt those cool Dave Weckl flutters.

CONCLUSION

At £60 the All-N-1's cost will pay for itself many times over, but my one thought was that it should have a Russ Miller carry case to protect it. Being not too weighty and very portable, all the models have something to offer. In conclusion, if you have yet to invest in a decent, durable practice pad then you will gain much satisfaction in purchasing one of these, not only for your pocket's sake but for your playing's sake as well. Now where are my brushes? ●

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ORIGINAL SERIES MAPLE SPLIT LACQUER KIT

Keeping things simple with Natal… and not a dwarf puddle frog in sight

Words: Tom Voce **Images:** Richard Ecclestone

I spent an interesting hour or so reading about Natal province in South Africa hoping to find a fascinating nugget of knowledge for some cleverly amusing factoid-based intro. What I really wanted was an insight to why Natal Drums' creator, Afro-Cuban percussionist Alan Sharp, decided to name his company after a wide and beautiful African province with its own species of dwarf puddle frog. I eventually found the inspiration for the name Natal: Alan combined part of his name with that of his wife, Natalie. As you look more and more at this company, everything else gets simpler, too.

Take their products: they do five ranges of kit. Normally, people decide what to buy based on what they can afford and how the price weighs up against the balance of features. This gets complicated, and to top it off, they may end up having to go for something with fewer features. This isn't the case with Natal drums, as all kits they build today have exactly the same features and quality of finish. The only thing you have to choose is the wood – ash, birch, maple, walnut, bubinga. Here we're looking at maple, and a rather modern looking split lacquer orange sparkle kit.

IN DETAIL AND IN USE

Maple. The classic. One of the best drum woods around: articulate, bright, deep and resonant. The edges are 45 degrees, aiding sustain, opening up brightness and creating clarity. The shallow depths of the toms sacrifice projection but earn the drums tone and character. The shells are seven-ply all across the board for that solid weighty punch. Despite this, the toms feel out-gunned by the kick in an acoustic environment. This is the US Fusion X configuration, and while the toms are shallower than normal, the kick is a standard 18" depth, giving a significantly different character. The kick simply has too much projection for the toms to match. Once outside a room this balance changes, and there are many acoustic and musical situations where an aggressively

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"THE SNARE DELIVERS A PUNCHY CRACK PLAYED LOUD AND OFFERS SOME TONAL NUANCE AT LOW VOLUMES"

loud kick drum is required. The toms sound great and I was able to bust out some melodic samba grooves in celebration of Natal's Latin percussion beginnings. The toms sing nicely and react to low velocities very well.

The Pro Series hardware is extremely solid and carries loads of features: the hi-hat stand is two footed yet remarkably sturdy, and the kick pedal has Natal's Free Floating Spring System, which lets you control beater rebound without feeling any difference in weight. There are two cam shape options on the pedal, one which accelerates the beater at the head, and one which lets you control the attack. Unless you want your kick louder than a hi-viz Hawaiian shirt, my choice with this drum would be the smooth cam for more dynamic control.

Elsewhere among the hardware are more sturdy stands with disappearing booms that can be tucked inside the tube to become a just as sturdy straight stand. The tom mounts are single piece and low profile with an old-school look about them. While a lot of modern hardware has a chunky look, this hardware has heavy-duty practicality with a sleeker appearance.

While I was hoping to play a wooden stave snare that caught my eye at Natal's stand at the London Drum Show, I wasn't disappointed to find what I took for a high-end metal bad boy instead. It's hand hammered on the inner beaded section, it's well made and looks great, it sounds cutting without being harsh, and has some added tonal complexity courtesy of the hammering that we're so used to seeing in quality cymbals. It can deliver a punchy crack played loud or offer some tonal nuance at low volume without ever sounding too metallic. All this comes at a price, and I was amazed to find it's an incredibly small one. It simply never occurred to me that this snare drum would be under £200.

CONCLUSION

Natal started with the desire to create instruments that players wanted to play. When conguero Alan Sharp made his congas in the 1960s he wanted something that wasn't on offer at the time. Now Natal offer a choice of woods all made to the same high build standard with all the features you'd expect as a player. Simple. ●

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- Rhythm Magazine December 2015

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* Kit shown - Arcadia UFXP Grey Strata. (Cymbals not included).

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Contents

Guest Tuition

83 Tom Meadows

85 Dean Hendy
The Style File – Part IX

86 Steve Timms
Accents – Part VI

87 Jamie Smale
Striking The Right Exam Note

88 James Hester
The Rhythm Section – Part XVIII

89 Anika Nilles
Quintuplets – Groups Of Three And Four

90 Sebastiaan de Krom
Max Roach – Part XII

91 Will Fry
Shaker 101 – Part I

92 Ethan Lewis Maltby
Noise 3 – Part XI

93 Pete Lockett
Double Trouble… What A Drag

83 Tom Meadows

Tom Meadows has worked with the cream of the pop crop – Kylie, Leona Lewis, Duffy, Girls Aloud and James Morrison are just a few of the names on his CV as a studio and live drummer. He is endorsed by Yamaha, Istanbul Agop, Aquarian, ProMark, Porter & Davies, Ultimate Ears, Ahead Armour Cases and Cympad.
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85 Dean Hendy

Dean is an in-demand professional session player and clinician, performing with artists such as Jason Donovan and for West End shows. Dean also teaches in his native Lincoln.

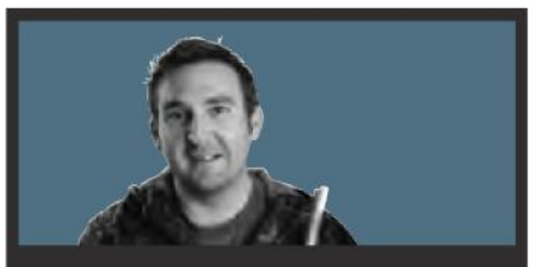
Dean is very proud to endorse Natal, Zildjian Cymbals, Evans Heads, Vater Sticks, Protection Racket, Hardcase, Custom IEM Co and Stageworks Gear.
www.deanhendy.com

86 Steve Timms

Steve's passion is to provide and promote top quality education for drummers, working with students at the Back 2 The Beat Drum Academies that run throughout Essex. One of Steve's students won Young Drummer Of The Year 2007 and in all the years he has been putting students through the Trinity/Guildhall exams he's never had a fail.
www.back2thebeat.co.uk

87 Jamie Smale

Jamie is a percussion and general music and diploma examiner for Trinity College London. He also freelances at the Graz Opera and with Ensemble Zeitfluss, and is the director of Music Academy Smale. Jamie received a distinction for his postgraduate diploma from Trinity College of Music and has taught at Dartington College of Arts and Channings Wood Prison.
www.musicacademysmale.com



88 James Hester

James has been working with artists as diverse as Malachai and Geoff Barrow (Portishead) through to Pitchshifter's Mark Clayden. Current projects: Cars on Fire and a studio project with Damon Minchella (Ocean Colour Scene/Paul Weller) and Kieron Pepper (Prodigy). He is also head of drums at BIMM Bristol. He endorses Mapex, Paiste, Vic Firth, Remo and Protection Racket.
www.jameshester.co.uk

89 Anika Nilles

Anika is a German drummer, songwriter and producer. She focuses on writing and producing her own music, which is available on her YouTube channel. Her fine technique, the distinctiveness of her sound, and her strong groove characterise her songs and her way of playing. She is endorsed by Meinl cymbals, Mapex, Evans Drumheads, Vic Firth, Ahead and Slapklatz.
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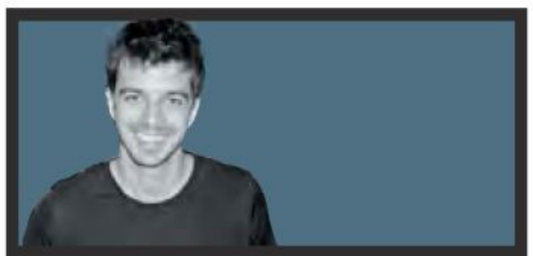
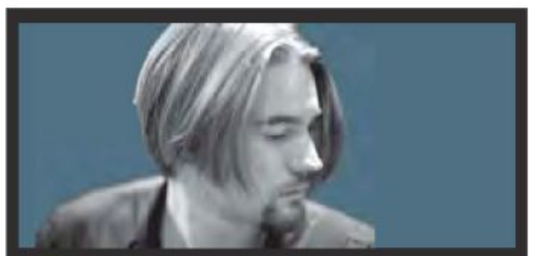
90 Sebastiaan de Krom

Sebastiaan studied at Berklee College of Music, and won the Buddy Rich Award in 1995. He holds a master's degree in jazz studies and performed with Herbie Hancock, and John Scofield. He played with Jamie Cullum for eight years and currently teaches at BIMM London, and Leeds College of Music.



91 Will Fry

Will plays an array of percussion instruments from around the world and has performed, recorded or toured with Baaba Maal, Jamiroquai, Roy Ayers, Duffy, Ernesto Simpson, Sola Akingbola, Snowboy, Phil Gould, and several West End shows. He endorses Sabian cymbals, Vater drumsticks, Protection Racket cases and Roland electronic percussion.
www.willfrypercussion.com



92 Ethan Lewis Maltby

Ethan Lewis Maltby is a British composer who specialises in writing for theatre. His first percussion show, Noise Ensemble, toured the world between 2006 and 2010. He has written pieces for large events, including the opening ceremonies of four FA Cup Finals, UEFA Europa League Final, UEFA Women's Champions League Final and the Heineken Cup Final.
www.ethanlewismaltby.com

93 Pete Lockett

Pete is a versatile multi-percussionist immersing himself in percussion styles from around the globe. Diverse artists have called upon his skills; Björk, Peter Gabriel, Robert Plant, Bill Bruford, Jeff Beck, Zakir Hussain, Steve Smith, Jarvis Cocker, and more. Pete has released seven albums and his new book *Indian Rhythms For The Drum Set* is available from Hudson Music.
www.petelockett.com

Tom **Meadows**

"While some phrases will work better than others, there are endless possibilities if you work through even just a few rudiments or pages from a book like Wilcoxon's Modern Rudimental Solos"

level
Intermediate

Creative Concepts – Part III

Getting creative with substitution, double and single strokes

Hi everybody and welcome to the third and final part in my series on creativity and the concepts behind it. I'm hoping you're not in a whirlwind of confusion from last month and ready to explore even more creative possibilities.

This month let's look at three concepts to wrap things up – substitution, double strokes and single strokes. Once again, these can be used either separately or in conjunction with the previous concepts to create a lot of music from just one phrase.

Let's begin with substitution – this can mean a few things but the simplest way to begin to think about substitution is between the hands and the feet. If we take a rudiment like the six-stroke roll, it usually looks like **example 1.**

We can create a new feel to these by substituting feet for hands. Let's start with the first set of unaccented notes, as seen in **example 2.**

Example 3 shows the second set of unaccented notes.

Or we could substitute the middle unaccented notes **(example 4**).

Obviously we could substitute any part of the sticking for a foot, though I tend to keep the accents on the hands – however the joy of creativity is that there is no right or wrong; play whatever feels and sounds good to you.

You'll notice I've been vague in terms of the voicing for the feet: that's because a stepped hi-hat can sound very cool as a substitute voice. You could even alternate between using a kick drum and a stepped hat (you can disappear down a creative worm hole for a long time, if you're not careful).

I've used just one rudiment as an example and, while some phrases will work better than others, there are endless possibilities if you work through even just a few rudiments or pages from a book like Wilcoxon's *Modern Rudimental Solos*.

Next up are single strokes and double strokes. You might wonder how single and double strokes are creative stepping stones but on a very basic level they create different textures within a phrase and therefore different sonic possibilities. The way we're going to use them is to affect both the texture and meter of a phrase.

There are a few ways we can do this. Firstly, let's just play with the textures. If we take the six-stroke roll again we can turn the double strokes in to singles (see **example 5**).

EX 1

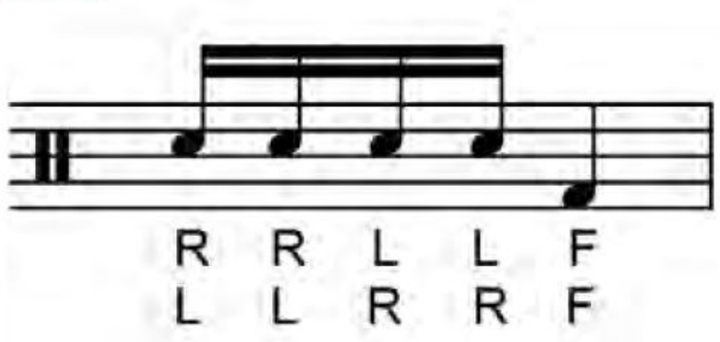
EX 2

EX 3

EX 4

EX 5

EX 6



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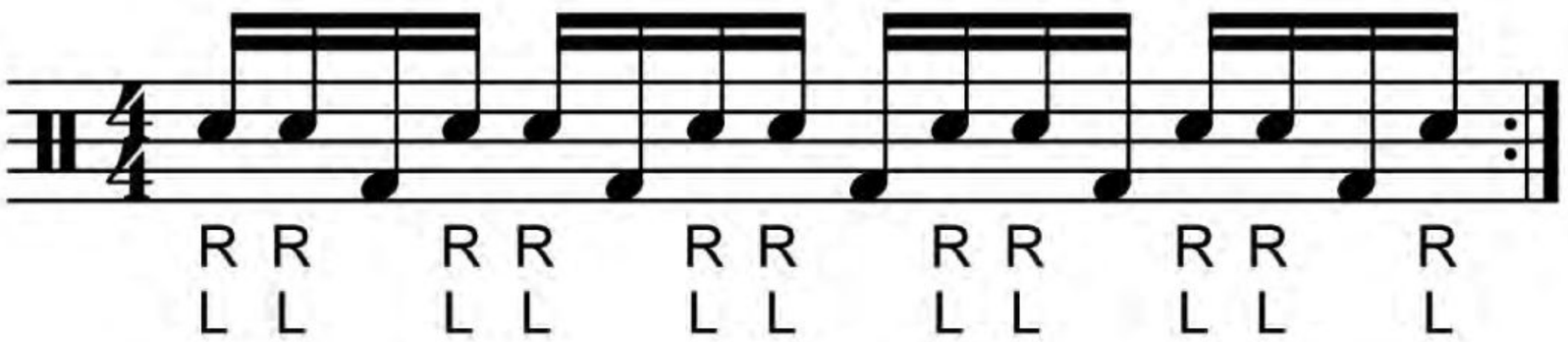

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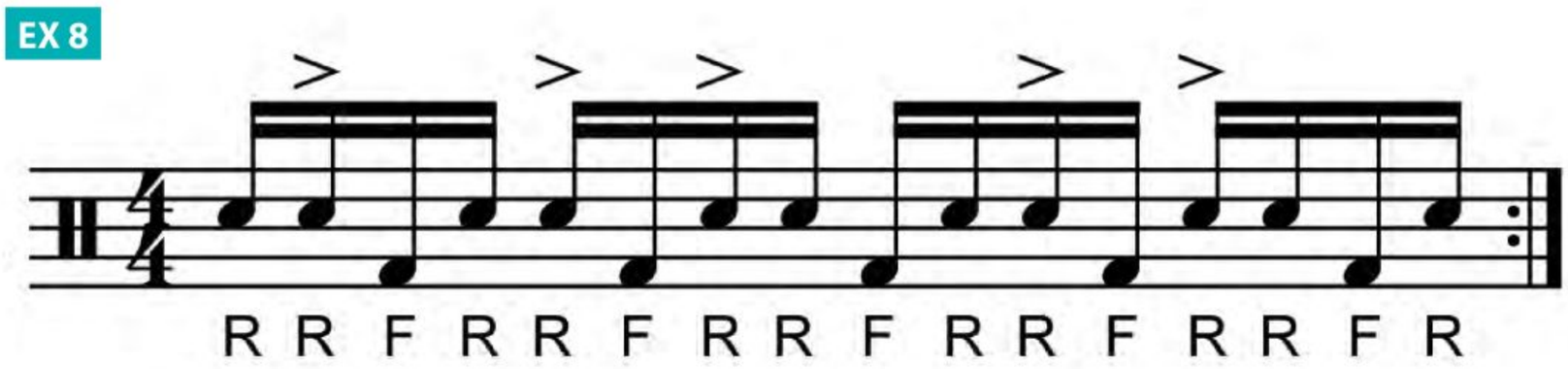

EX 9

Obviously this doesn't change the structure of the rudiment in terms of the accents but it does open up the voicing possibilities. Often, if we're playing closed double strokes, they don't translate very well on to anything other than the snare or maybe the hi-hat, but by using single strokes we can move the unaccented notes on to other voices like the toms. This will change the phrasing's texture and make it slightly more aggressive with slightly less of an 'up and down' dynamic.

So on to double strokes now. Let's take a classic grouping of three: RLF or LRF. We can do exactly as before with the single stroke idea and simply play the first two notes as an open double with one hand: RRF or LLF. The other possibility is to use double strokes and double up the meter, too (**example 6**).

If we apply the groupings over a bar of sixteenth notes they could look like this (**example 7**).

Where you choose to apply any accent is up to you but try to mix it up through the bar (**example 8**).

The next step is to experiment with your voicing. Try moving the hand that's playing the double stroke around the kit, maybe even splitting the double up between voices, too.

The final possibility is now to double up the meter within the phrase as well as double up the unaccented notes (**example 9**).

In terms of accenting, try playing a crash or open hi-hat on top of the foot. Experiment with different phrases or rudiments and remember that the double strokes can be played either open or closed, so you could move the hands around the kit depending how much attack and aggression you want.

That's all for me and this series; I hope it's given you food for thought and showed that creating musical phrasing isn't as impossible as it can sometimes feel. Remember, these few ideas are stepping stones leading to endless possibilities; there's no right or wrong – just what feels and sounds good to you. You'll soon see how much one phrase can offer musically.

Tom Meadows has worked with the cream of the pop crop – Kylie, Leona Lewis, Duffy, Girls Aloud and James Morrison are just a few of the names on his CV as a studio and live drummer. He is endorsed by Yamaha, Istanbul Agop, Aquarian, ProMark, Porter & Davies, Ultimate Ears, Ahead Armor Cases and Cympad.
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Feel free to drop me a line via Twitter @thomasmeadows or at my website tommeadows.co.uk and I'll see you at a gig soon

Dean **Hendy**

"Ghost notes should be 'felt' rather than heard; they can help add colour to drum beats and fills and add a cool decoration to your playing"

level Beginner

The Style File – Part IX

Blues shuffles for beginners

This month we are looking at some variations of the blues shuffle, but first a little bit of history.

Blues is a style of music originally developed in the southern part of the USA. There are a few variations of shuffles, a few of the more noticeable ones include: the Texas shuffle, the Kansas City shuffle, the flat tire shuffle, the driving shuffle, the Charleston shuffle and so on…

Blues is all about feel and dynamics. A great blues drummer once described a perfect shuffle as making it sound like a train. It's all about the groove – it doesn't matter if it's really slow or really fast, it's got to groove.

Let's start with the basics first. As one of the masters of the shuffle, Mr Bernard 'Pretty' Purdie said: "I'll 'splain to you, not explain, but I'll 'splain to you."

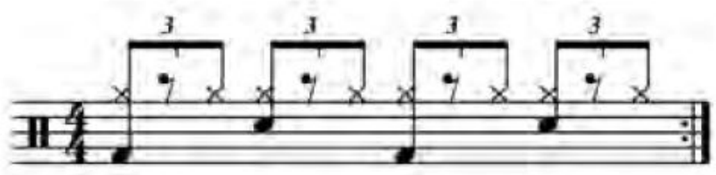
Ways of counting the shuffle hi-hat:

- 1-Trip-Let, 2-Trip-Let, 3-Trip-Let, 4-Trip-Let.
- 1 + a, 2 + a, 3 + a, 4 + a.
- 1 2 3, 1 2 3, 1 2 3, 1 2 3.

The shuffle hi-hat pattern is written using triplet notation, with the second part of each triplet being replaced by a rest. Count it however you feel comfortable.

Example 1

Playing a basic shuffle groove, add the kick on beats one and three and snare on two and four.



Example 2

This is a driving shuffle groove, playing the kick drum on all quarter notes.

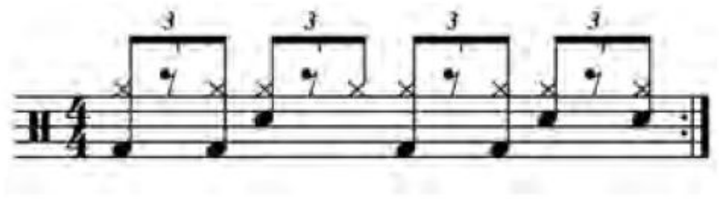
Example 3

This time you're adding in two extra snare drum hits. Try playing this groove at a slower tempo such as 70BPM.

Example 4

Add more kick drum in to give the groove a push feeling with a snare at the end to turn it around.

Before we go onto the next example let me speak a little about ghost notes. Ghost notes are just like any other notes but played as quietly as possible – they should be 'felt' rather than heard. They can help add colour to drum beats and fills and add a cool decoration to your playing.



Example 5

This is the same as **example 1** but this time play a ghost note on the second part of the triplet.

Example 6

Adding more kick drums to the groove, try playing at a slower tempo to start with and increase when ready.

Example 7

This is a half time shuffle, with the snare now played on the three.

Example 8

Same as above but adding in extra kick drums.

Examples 9A and 9B

This is playing the hi-hat part with accents to really bring the shuffle to life. When played with ghost notes it can really bring that feel to your groove, so start with hi-hats first then bring the ghost note snare in when ready.

Example 10A and 10B

The next job is adding the snare to beat three, which can sometimes be trickier than it looks. When that is ready, **example 10B** adds in the kick drum.

Remember to play these examples at all speeds from 50BPM, which is really slow but will give you a great challenge, up to 160BPM.

Dean Hendy

Dean is an in-demand professional session player and clinician with countless musicals, theatre shows, orchestral concerts and thousands of gigs to his name. Regularly performing with artists as diverse as Jason Donovan and for West End shows, Dean also teaches in his native Lincoln as well as providing workshops and demonstrations at drum events up and down the country. Dean proudly endorses Natal, Zildjian Cymbals, Evans Heads, Vater Sticks, Protection Racket, Hardcase, Stageworks Gear, Mapex Hardware, Drumtuna, Custom IEM Co and Direct Isolation Headphones. **www.deanhendy.com**

Steve **Timms**

"The following examples are combinations of single, double, right and left accents. These can give you some great syncopation within the paradiddle sticking."

level **Beginner**

Accents – Part VI

Paradiddle accents in half-bar fills

In this study, we have eight examples of how you could apply the single paradiddle with accents to half bar snare drum fills. When you see these written down, they don't look that inspiring, but when they are played with good dynamic control they sound great.

Example 1
Here we are accenting all of the right hands.

Example 2
We now do the opposite and switch to accenting all of the left hands.

Example 3
This time accent both sets of single strokes.

Example 4
And now both sets of doubles.

Examples 5 to 8
The following examples are combinations of single, double, right and left accents. These can give you some great syncopation within the paradiddle sticking.

In next month's issue we'll apply these ideas to grooves.

EX 1

EX 2

EX 3

EX 4

EX 5

EX 6

EX 7

EX 8

If you have any questions or comments contact me at info@back2thebeat.co.uk

Back 2 the Beat Drum Academy

Our aim at the Back 2 the Beat Drum Academy is to provide people of all ages and abilities the opportunity to develop their musical skills and explore their own playing potential. During the course each student will participate in practical classes where they will cover drum techniques, rudiments, co-ordination, drum notation and reading. They will also participate in a selection of rhythm section workshops where they will have the opportunity to play alongside other musicians. Each student will be offered the chance to study for the Trinity Guildhall drum kit exams up to a Grade 8. These classes are run by an experienced team of drum tutors, dedicated to providing a top class education for drummers and percussionists. For more info, please visit: **www.back2thebeat.co.uk.**

Jamie **Smale**

"You will be nervous but don't slouch – stand up straight and relax your shoulders. Take deep breaths and focus before walking into the exam room"

level
Intermediate

Striking The Right Exam Note

Top exam tips from the man in the know

Worried about your exams? Here are some tips to impress your examiner without even playing a note. Exams are very much like interviews and first impressions count.

Be smart and stand out

Dress smartly but wear shoes that sit comfortably on the pedals – rubber rules the day. Make sure you have played through all of your exam repertoire in the shoes you wear for the exam a number of times. You will be nervous but don't slouch – stand up straight and relax your shoulders. Take deep breaths and focus before walking into the exam room.

Appointment sheet

The first time you meet your examiner will be when you hand them your appointment sheet. Make sure you have filled it in neatly, with all sections filled in correctly and clearly. Also, make eye contact with your examiner and smile – this gives them the impression that you are confident and ready for the exam. A simple 'good morning', 'good afternoon' or 'good evening' is all you need to say.

Crucial checks

I am not just talking about having your flies done up. Walk confidently over to the drum kit and adjust it to your personal needs. Make sure your stool is at the correct height, that all drums and cymbals are in a comfortable playing position, that the snares are on (if needed) and that the hi-hats are open at the correct height for you.

Don't waste time

Do all of the above as quickly as possible; setting up quickly and efficiently is a crucial part of being a drummer. Don't start up a conversation with your examiner – they really don't need to know what you had for breakfast.

Sound check/volume control

Ask if you can check the volume of the backing track and make a quick decision about the volume you need. Play along for a few bars – but only a few. If there is a problem, speak clearly and start by saying 'excuse me.'

Rubber really does rule

While soundchecking, see if the kick drum is slipping – every drummer's nightmare. If it is, don't worry, because you will have brought along a rubber car mat or two…

Be prepared

Under exam conditions, nerves can affect you, like dropping a stick, for example. So take along a small stick table with a spare pair of sticks and don't stop if you drop one. Pick up the spare and carry on as if nothing has happened. Bring along the CD for the backing track, but also have the track on your phone and on a USB stick in case of any unforeseen problems. If you wear a tie, take a spare. If you don't, you can be sure you will dip it in your pre-exam coffee.

When you've done all of this, your examiner is already impressed – now you just need to play awesomely and you will have secured yourself a distinction.

No nos

1. Turning up late – allow for bad traffic.
2. Forgetting your sticks, book or CD.
3. Starting to play without the snares on.
4. Taking more than a couple of minutes for the kit adjustment and sound check together.
5. Stopping near the end of a piece and asking to start again – keep going. Only ask for a restart if you really can't go on.

TRINITY COLLEGE LONDON

Trinity College London is a leading external examinations board offering qualifications for a range of instruments including Drum Kit. Our Drum Kit exams (Grades 1-8) are designed to develop accomplished drum kit players, both musically and stylistically. The syllabus explores a wealth of different styles through a range of specially commissioned repertoire by leading drum kit performers and educators, available in a series of Drum Kit repertoire books with playalong CDs.

A brand new range of qualifications and song books for Rock & Pop Drums are also available now, with songs by a range of artists including Elbow, Green Day and the Rolling Stones. **www.trinitycollege.co.uk.**

James **Hester**

"What is key is that your parts are considered and musically justified, not just random and based on what you've been practicing in your drum room"

level: Intermediate

The Rhythm Section – Part XVIII

James wraps up his series on the rhythm section

So this brings us to the end of a look at rhythm section work – hopefully it's just the start of your journey of taking your drum skills and developing them with your musicianship skills. The time has come to have an overview of the things we've looked at over the last year and a bit.

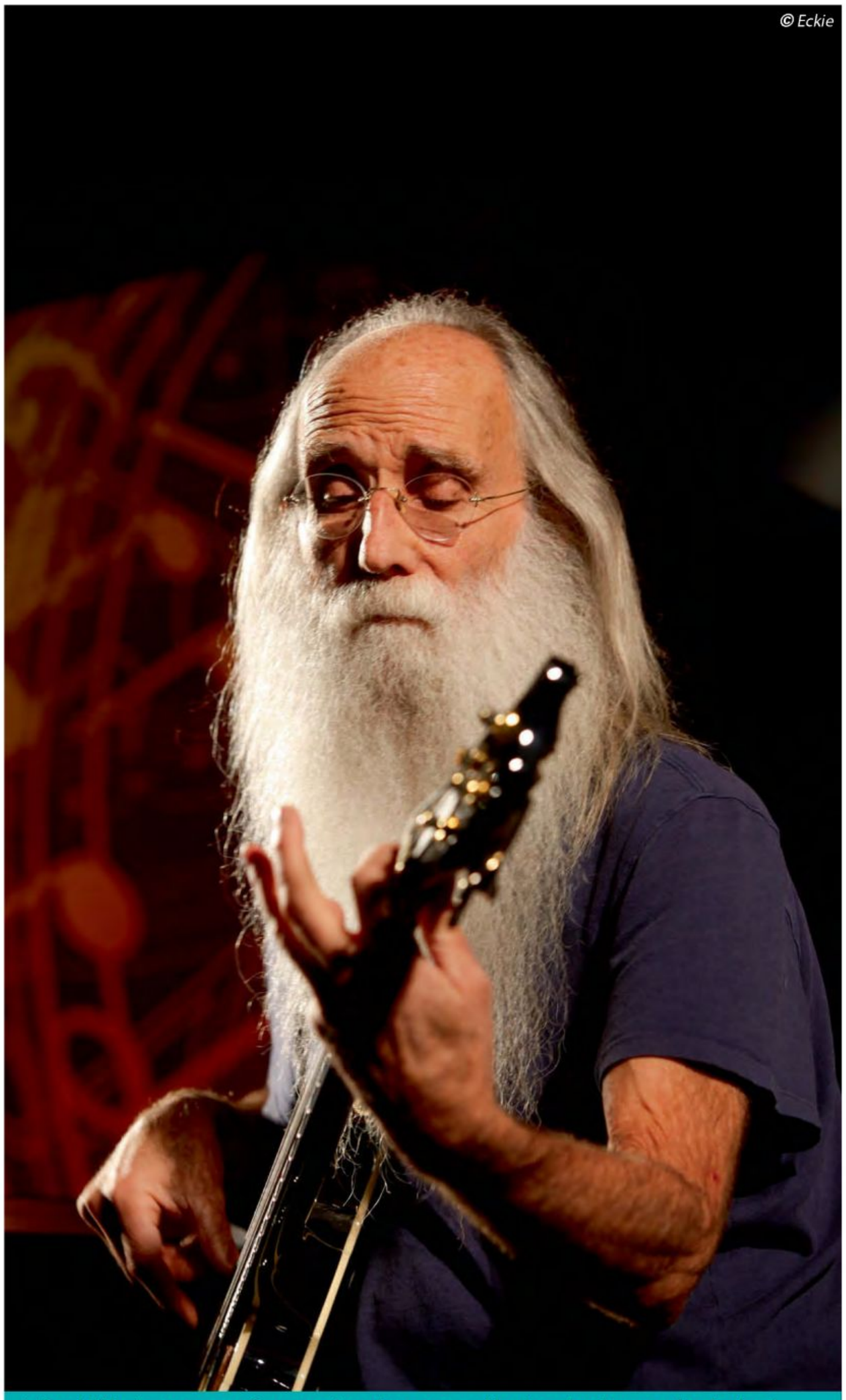
Think about the dialogue between yourself and the bass player. Are you mirroring the part they're playing? If so, by how much? Every note (like Flea and Chad Smith in the Red Hot Chili Peppers) or just a few key ones? Who is taking the lead with fills and in between those mirrored notes? The last thing you want to do is play over each other, so are you going to take the lead (Abe Laboriel Jr and Leland Sklar on Vanessa Carlton's 'A Thousand Miles' – pictured) or let the bass player (Carlo Nuccio and George Porter Jr on Tori Amos's 'Cornflake Girl')? It could be that to make the bass player's syncopated part make sense you need to mark the pulse more clearly with a 'framing' part (Tony Thompson and Bernard Edwards with Chic). The point is: think about how the vocals are affected in their delivery – that's when subjectivity kicks in and you as a band, songwriter or producer decide which you like. What is key is that your parts are considered and musically justified, not just random and based on what you've been practicing in your drum room.

Another skill we could use to support the vocals is to 'set up the chorus' – taking the rhythm of the key lyrics in the chorus to play in the verses – it's a good thematic skill to make the chorus seem familiar before it kicks in. A simple version of this is on Sting's 'Seven Days' (Vinnie Colaiuta and Sting) where the mirrored verse groove sets up the rhythm of the days of the week in the chorus. Songwriters use this skill too; check out 'Weather With You' by Crowded House and 'A Thousand Miles' (again) to see not just how the band set up the words of the chorus in the verse but, even more skillfully, the bridge lyrics avoid the key rhythms to further highlight their importance.

These are just a few of the key things to listen for in your favorite songs. Remember to work on all the rhythm section ideas that we've been looking at more recently; but my hope is that you'll be listening back to your favorite songs and hear them with new ears. Hopefully you'll have a new found appreciation of the classic rhythm sections of their age and what they've brought to the table in regards to delivering the songwriters' songs to the listeners in the best manner possible.

I hope you've enjoyed this series – next month I'll be returning to a more drum orientated look at how we can apply some basic ideas to well known stickings to create a concise practice routine but also generate a more creative approach to rudiments in general.

Good luck and have (a) good time!



Leland Sklar is a master of supporting the song and letting the drums take the lead

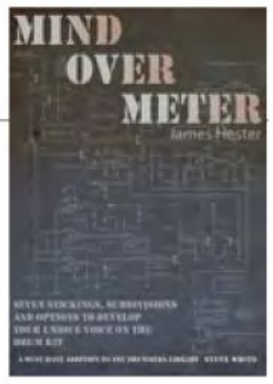
Check out www.jameshester.co.uk for downloadable audio files of these grooves and bass-lines to work with and more free lessons.

BIMM INSTITUTE BRISTOL

Industry interest in BIMM bands is growing with showcases being held on a regular basis. Bristol local and Kasabian sticksman Ian Matthews held a fantastic BIMM masterclass, not only covering drum essentials but discussing in depth industry insight too"

Call 08442 646666 or check out their website www.bimm.co.uk for Manchester, Bristol, Dublin and Brighton open days. Follow them on Twitter and Facebook.

To order a copy of James's book *Mind Over Meter* visit **www.jameshester.co.uk**



Anika **Nilles**

"We've already had a look at the grouping system of three and four over quintuplets and in this tuition you'll get an insight in to how to combine them with a groove"

level
Intermediate

Quintuplets – Groups Of Three And Four

Spice up your groupings by adding fills to grooves

Welcome to the next tuition on quintuplets. We've already had a look at the grouping system of three and four over quintuplets and in this tuition you'll get an insight in to how to combine them with a groove. Within these examples the fills are grouped as quintuplet sixteenth notes.

Example 1

Here you can see the main pattern of the group of three – I suggest a right-hand lead sticking. The right hand is moving around the toms while the left hand stays on the snare.

Example 2

The fill in this section happens over the bar line. The fill pattern starts on the fourth sixteenth note of beat four in bar one. At the end there is one sixteenth note to fill up the bar (+1). Stay with right-hand lead sticking here too.

Example 3

The focus is on the fourth quarter note where the fill starts – you'll see it's also an 'over the bar line' fill like in **example 2**. On the fourth quarter note you start with a stroke on the snare, which is played with the left hand. After that, start with the right-hand lead sticking again.

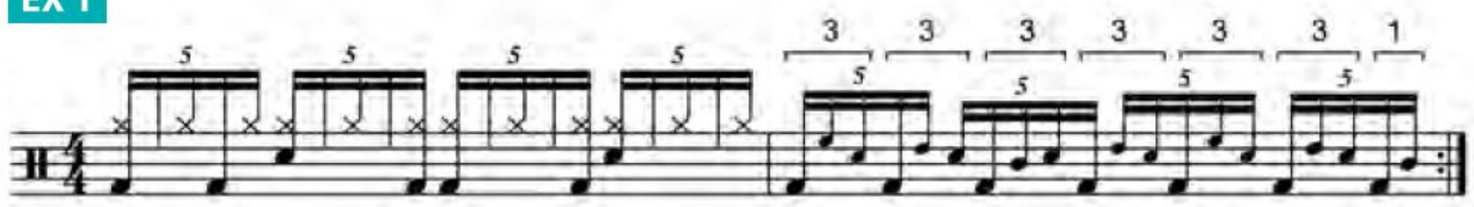
Example 4

Here you start the fill in the second bar on beat two. This time the group of three starts with the right hand instead of the kick.

Examples 5 and 6

Both examples combine the groups of three and four. **Example 6** is also an 'over the bar line' fill. Start both fills with the kick and play the strokes in between with a simple single stroke sticking.

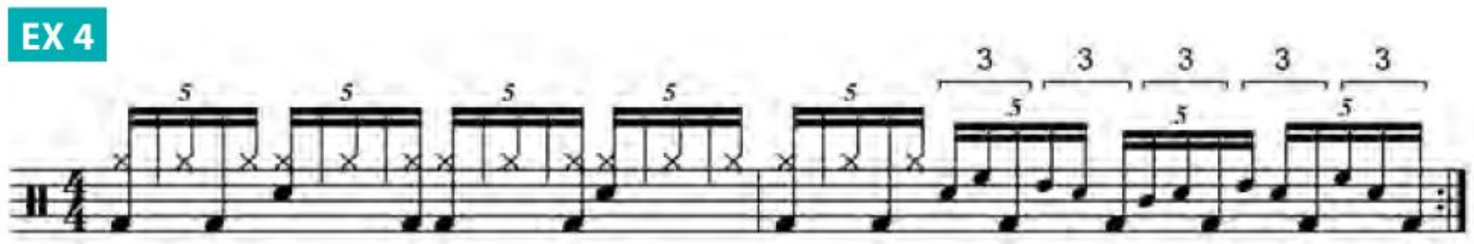
EX 1



EX 2

EX 3

EX 4



EX 5

EX 6

Anika is a German drummer, songwriter and producer. She studied at the University of Popular Music and Music Business in Mannheim and focuses on writing and producing her own music, which is available on her YouTube channel. Her fine technique, the distinctiveness of her sound, and her strong groove characterise her songs and her way of playing. She is endorsed by Meinl cymbals, Mapex, Evans Drumheads, Vic Firth, Ahead and Slapklatz.

www.anikanilles.com www.facebook.com/groovedesign www.youtube.com/user/anykmusic instagram.com/anika.nilles twitter.com/AnikaNilles

Sebastiaan **de Krom**

"I stress to my students that if you want to study something then pay attention to details and don't give up too soon."

level
Intermediate

Max Roach – Part XII

Seb's suggested Max Roach listening list

Previously, I have written about one of the greatest jazz drum masters ever, the late great Max Roach. Studying his playing style gives the drum student a thorough grounding in playing modern jazz drums and musicianship. I stress to my students that if you want to study something then pay attention to details and don't give up too soon. Don't skip through something in a superficial way, otherwise you will never master what you want to learn. It's a harsh reality but to become really good at something it takes time, love and perseverance. That means hours of dedicated practising (in jazz we call it shedding because you need to spend a lot of hours with your instrument in a shed – figuratively speaking.) That does not apply only to music but everything you really want to become good at; talent will only get you so far but commitment and dedication does wonders. A lot of players 'shed' a lot but wonder why they're not getting better. Have a healthy dose of self-criticism and ask yourself if you are practising the right stuff in the right way; spend about half of your practice regime going through what you already know and maintaining the well-oiled machine.

Where most students go wrong is that they are not spending time learning something really new. This will challenge your brain to reset itself and the more you do it, the quicker you'll become at learning new material. Be patient and the results will come. Also, a lot of student musicians don't spend enough time really listening to music on records and going to live concerts. Develop the discipline just to sit down, listen and enjoy intently without disruptions of any kind, otherwise you won't absorb the subtleties of the music. This is not as easy as it sounds – it can be hard to concentrate on one particular thing. Max Roach has made many records and here is a list I would strongly recommend you listen to. Most listings are led by him but exceptions are in brackets:

The Max Roach Quartet Featuring Hank Mobley, Clifford Brown & Max Roach (co-led with Clifford Brown), *Study in Brown* (co-led with Clifford Brown), *Max Roach + 4, Jazz in 3/4 Time, The Max Roach 4 Plays Charlie Parker, Max, Max Roach + 4 on the Chicago Scene, Max Roach + 4 at Newport, Deeds, Not Words, Award-Winning Drummer, Quiet As It's Kept, Moon Faced and Starry Eyed, Rich Versus Roach* (co-led with Buddy Rich), *Parisian Sketches, We Insist!, Percussion Bitter Sweet, It's Time.*

All of these albums are great and feature Max Roach at his best. Of course there are more fantastic recordings with him (as a leader and as a sideman), but any of the above should provide you with many inspiring and enjoyable listening hours.

Here are a few more examples in the style of Max Roach. Practise all of these starting slowly and work up to a fast tempo. All these examples are built upon playing single and double strokes in a musical way at very fast tempos. Practise both with and without feathering the kick drum. Enjoy!

Example 1

Try different stickings – the most efficient are singles. Listen to where the tom notes fall. They act as accents falling on what seems to be weird places but after a while your ears should be used to it.

Example 2

This is a very simple example with a twist. Play it slowly at first and then increase the tempo to fast or very fast. Play single strokes throughout. This will improve your stamina with single strokes and travelling with your hands to all the toms.

Example 3

This example is designed to improve your single and double strokes. Try to make both combinations sound exactly the same. You will probably find that double strokes are easier on this example, but try to get the same result with singles.

Example 4

A typical melodic Max Roach lick, basically a quotation from a famous bebop introduction. Listen to how you can play and quote rhythmic ideas that are also very melodic.

Example 5

Play this example with different stickings. Try singles, doubles and different combinations with the figures, like RRL R or RLL R, and invent your own sticking combinations. Create a more buzzing sound using a buzz roll while playing the triplets but play the quarter note as normal, especially on faster tempos.

EX 1

EX 2

EX 3

EX 4

EX 5

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BIMM London (previously Tech Music School) delivers professional, real-world training for performers, producers, songwriters and business entrepreneurs. The campus is in Effie Road, Fulham, with state-of-the-art facilities, including recording studios, Mac labs, post-production suites, rehearsal studios, lecture rooms, mixing rooms, performance spaces and teaching rooms, which support the development of technically accomplished and versatile graduates who are equipped for a sustainable career in the UK's most dynamic industry. Recent graduates are working with: Adele, One Direction, Jessie J, Basement Jaxx and more.

Will **Fry**

"Few things are more frustrating than having to play along to a shaker that doesn't sit correctly in the pocket."

level
Intermediate

Shaker 101 – Part I

Will shows us how to master the shaker

Although it's one of the smallest and simplest instruments, few things are more frustrating than having to play along to a shaker that doesn't sit correctly in the pocket. However, when played with a good feel, control and confidence, it becomes the glue that holds everyone together and a sure-fire way to get people feeling good. Over the next few lessons, I'll give you everything you need to know to be able to play this instrument creatively and confidently in a variety of styles of music. The first thing to do is to get a clean, consistent sound at three dynamic levels: soft, medium and loud.

Softly

At the quietest level, we're using only the wrist to move the shot inside the shaker. The movement is very small as we're moving just enough to make a sound. Get each stroke, forward and back, to sound even and crisp, without any 'swooshing' sound.

Medium

At a medium level the shaker movement from the wrist is a little stronger but still with our shoulders and arms relaxed.

Loud

At the loudest level we're really accenting the forward and back strokes and starting to use arm muscles a little more. It may take some time to get a crisp sound here without the after-sound of the shot slipping back down into the middle of the instrument.

Example 1

Practise **example 1** slowly, listening and analysing each stroke, aiming for a consistent sound and a clear difference at each dynamic level. Examples like this might seem boring but try to really listen and focus on your sound. I'm afraid there are no shortcuts here.

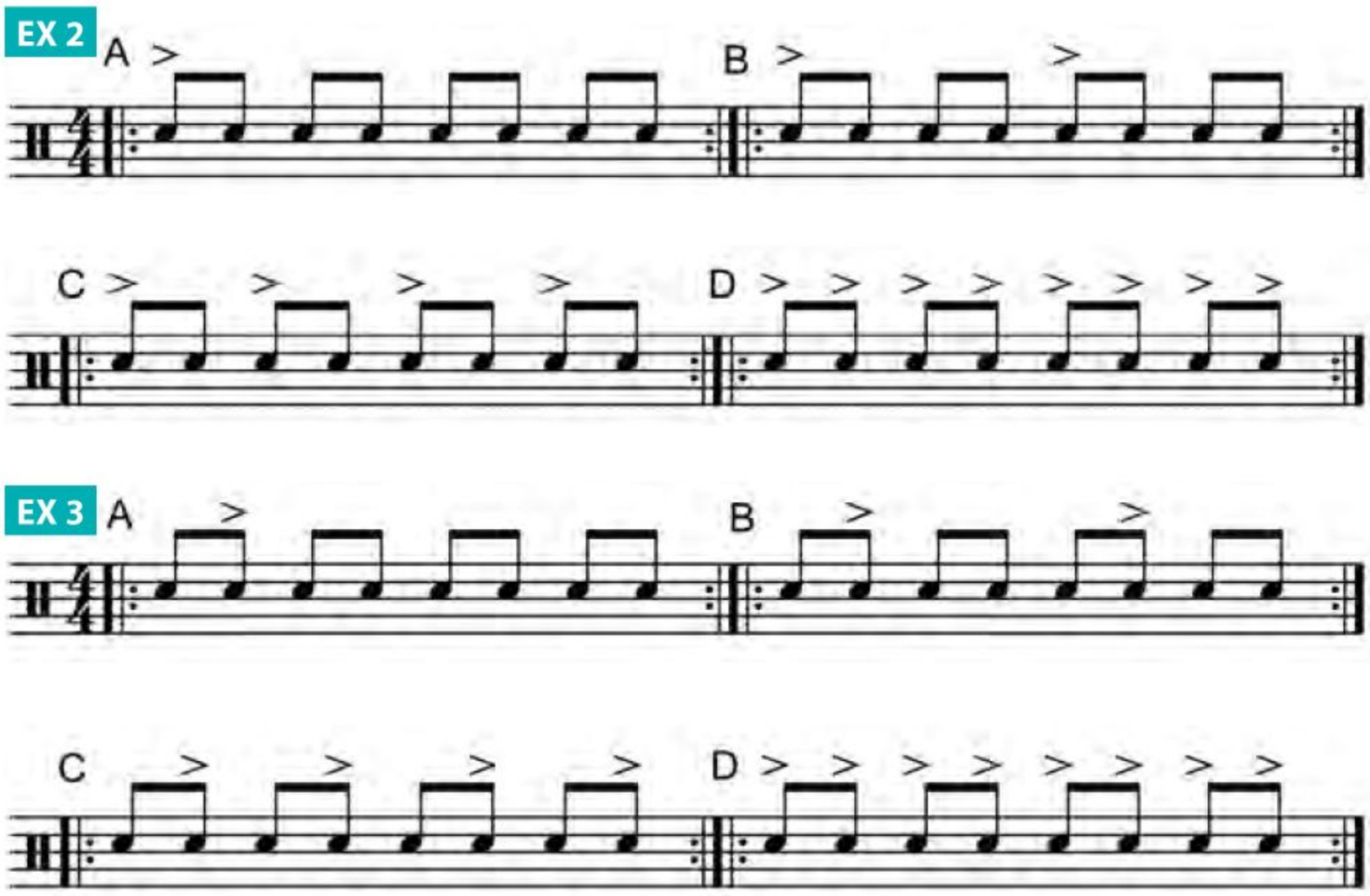
Examples 2-3

Once you have the correct motion and dynamics, we can start adding some accents. **Examples 2** and **3** are shaker workouts of sorts. Practise with a metronome, slowly at first and then crank up the tempo. Make sure you're able to start the exercise cleanly on the first forward note without an upbeat. You can work through more variations in **examples 4** to **7.**

To finish, play around with all of the examples above with a metronome, making your own variations. Try and turn these exercises into something more musical.

Next time we'll look at some other feels, time signatures and independence exercises.

EX 2



EX 3

EX 4

EX 5

EX 6

Further Study

I've never heard anyone play a shaker quite like Sola Akingbola – he has such a great feel. Check out Sola's own album *Routes To Roots* or his playing in Jamiroquai.

If you're feeling comfortable with the above exercises then try some simple sight reading exercises with your other hand while keeping the shaker going; page one of *Stick Control* (by George Lawrence Stone) is a good place to start.

EX 7

Will plays an array of percussion instruments from around the world and has performed, recorded or toured with Baaba Maal, Jamiroquai, Roy Ayers, Duffy, Ernesto Simpson, Sola Akingbola, Snowboy, Phil Gould, and several West End shows. He endorses Sabian cymbals, Vater drumsticks, Protection Racket cases and Roland electronic percussion.
www.willfrypercussion.com

Ethan Lewis **Maltby**

"Don't be afraid to slow sequences down and take your time to build it back up to tempo to ensure accuracy."

level: Intermediate /Advanced

Noise 3 – Part XI

The final section of the virtuosic snare drum trio 'Noise 3' from the percussion stage show *Noise Ensemble*

This month we look at the final part of the snare drum trio 'Noise 3' from the percussion stage show Noise Ensemble. It features three performers, each playing on one snare but utilising sticks, rims and both snare on and off. It is a virtuosic and rhythmically complex piece in which each part often interlinks with another to create the final rhythmic picture.

Overview on the section

The final four bars are mainly in unison and it's a loud sequence that should leave the audience feeling exhilarated. This is a theatrical piece so feel free to add elements of showmanship throughout. There are moments where stick throws or tricks can be added and give some thought to a final pose for the last beat – even a simple stick above held up above the head can be an effective ending.

Bars 82 – end

There is a rest in which the players are instructed to shout, the idea being to unleash a tribal, guttural noise but go with whatever feels right.

The final bar has all drummers playing a figure before they split and each one plays three sextuplets followed by an eighth note in a canon, all ending together with a final eighth note rimshot.

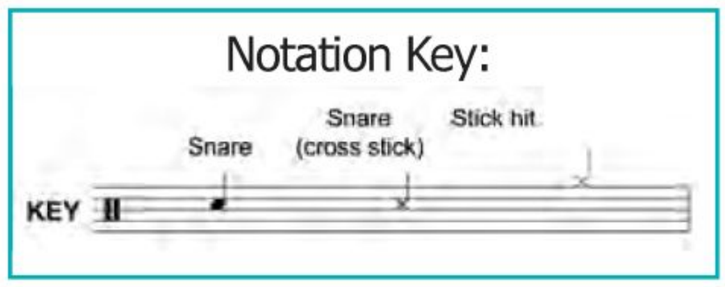
Final thoughts

The point of this track within the show *Noise Ensemble* was always meant as an intricately plotted, virtuosic showcase for a technical trio. When performed with precision, the piece can be very effective, especially the 12/8 sequence with the use of accents on the rims, however, the rhythmic accuracy and use of dynamics is key. Don't be afraid to slow sequences down and take your time to build it back up to tempo to ensure accuracy. Always try to have fun with the showmanship too. Good luck!

Noise Ensemble, is a theatrical percussion spectacular, it has toured all over the world from 2006-2010. This energetic show has played in Russia, Cyprus, Belgium, Holland, South Korea and Norway and toured extensively in UK theatres and venues including The South Bank Centre, Wembley Stadium and on *Blue Peter*.

Ethan Lewis Maltby is a British composer who specialises in writing for theatre. He has written percussion based pieces for large events, including the opening ceremonies of four FA Cup Finals, UEFA Europa League Final, UEFA Women's Champions League Final and the Heineken Cup Final.

www.ethanlewismaltby.com



Pete **Lockett**

"You could think of the grace note double and the hit that follows it as a drag, apart from the fact that the rudiment isn't highlighted by the concluding accent"

level
Intermediate /Advanced

Double Trouble... What A Drag

Pete continues his look at a 'drag' equivalent on the darabouka

We will continue our look at a drumming decoration found in Arabic percussion, similar to the snare drum 'drag'. The drag in drum set language is two 32nd grace notes before a single accent. On the darabouka this is played with more of a triplet emphasis - I have called it the 'triplet drag'. Please refer to the previous article for detail but I am still using notation as sixteenth notes.

Example 1

Let's continue with our groups of threes and twos – 3 3 3 3 2 2 = 16.

Example 2

3 3 2 2 3 3 = 16.

Example 3

2 2 3 3 3 3 = 16.

Examples 4a and 4b

So far, the 'triplet drag' has had two grace notes before the accent. This is where we radically swerve even further from the traditional drag and put the two grace notes after the accent.

Example 5

The idea is that the accent 'pushes' into the grace note double. Technically, you could think of the grace note double and the hit that follows it as a drag, apart from the fact that the rudiment isn't highlighted by the concluding accent. The emphasis is on the 'leading accent' pushing into the grace double. 3 3 2.

Example 6

This will only make sense when you sit with it for a while and get rid of the habit of playing the accent after the double. It is actually quite liberating! 3 2 3.

Example 7

Errrr… 2 3 3.

Example 8

Now for the crux of the whole series; pushing and pulling, landing or leaving. We have two triplet drags going to the accent followed by two triplet drags pushing away from the accent.

EX 1

EX 2

EX 3

EX 4A

EX 4B

EX 5

EX 6

EX 7

EX 8

A PROBLEM SHARED...

Our resident problem solver, **Dave Major**, answers your questions!

A QUIET RIOT

How do I play quietly without sounding timid? I'm having a really hard time achieving this.
Lewis, Glasgow

This is a great question and something that I have worked on extensively ever since the riot act was read to me in college: "If you don't learn to play quietly then you'll never work!" These words scared me massively and so I set about learning to play quietly.

Here's what I did to help. Firstly, I went back to the practice pad and worked on my rudiments at a low volume – triple piano for most of it. I'd spend a few minutes really honing in on the accuracy of the notes and then over the course of a few months try to increase the tempo. The pad is really the first place to start if you want to make any major technique/sound changes so don't be afraid of it.

Once you are back on the kit I would recommend taking off your hearing protection and playing a basic rock groove. Play it at a level where it is comfortable for your ears. Concentrate on your relaxation then focus on the sound. Is it full? Is it tight?

A big part of the groove and drive of quieter playing is in your mind – it's almost like a controlled rage. Best of luck and keep working.

EXPRESS WORKOUT

Are there any hand routines out there that I can do to improve my rudiments and techniques without having to spend hours on the pad?
Stephen, Edinburgh

Practising rudiments can be boring, there are no two ways about it. I like to work on those things as I keep the end goal of being faster or smoother on the kit in mind but even I get bored. Trying to get students to do any pad work is a struggle but I have had great success using Tommy Igoe's *Great Hands For A Lifetime*.

This routine is in three stages – beginner, intermediate and advanced – and includes most rudiments. The great thing about this routine is that it's never ending; there are many things you can do to alter it and increase the challenge. It is also written really well, the booklet is clear and designed nicely and the DVD, with explanations and demonstrations from Tommy, is excellent.

There is an alternative, which in my view is a lot harder but worth the effort: the 'rudimental ritual' by Alan Dawson. This is covered in the book *The Drummer's Complete Vocabulary As Taught by Alan Dawson*, written by John Ramsey. In it, John outlines Alan's ideas with the ritual and all the parts. Both of these are worth the effort to learn and your hands will thank you.

Dave Major is a professional drummer and teacher based in Edinburgh. He performs extensively throughout the UK with various artists and his own originals bands. He also records for a wide variety of international artists through the Internet. Widely sought after by students of all ages and abilities, Dave specialises in teaching you to teach yourself and develop your own style and philosophy.
www.dave-major.com

SHARE YOUR PROBLEMS WITH US!

Do you get nervous before you play? Are you struggling to move around your kit? Do you stumble at the same part in a song every time? Send your questions through to gemmah@blazepublishing.co.uk marked 'A problem shared…' and we'll get Dave to give you some expert advice.

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ED Drums....67
EMD Remo....11
Gewa/ LP RAW....8 & 9
Gewa / Gretsch....21
Graham Russell Drums....57
Headstock/ Zildjian....17
Headstock / Tama....99
iDrum....59
Kandu Cajons....67
Korg / Mapex....100
London Bass Guitar Show....61
London Drum Company....15
Media centre....63
Mike Dolbear....54 & 58
Murat Diril/ Strings & Things....73
Natal....79
Northern Drum Centre....97
Roto Drums....67
Soar Valley Music....69
Sonor....53
Step Drums....69
Thomann....80 & 81
Vic Firth....43
Westside – Sabian....02

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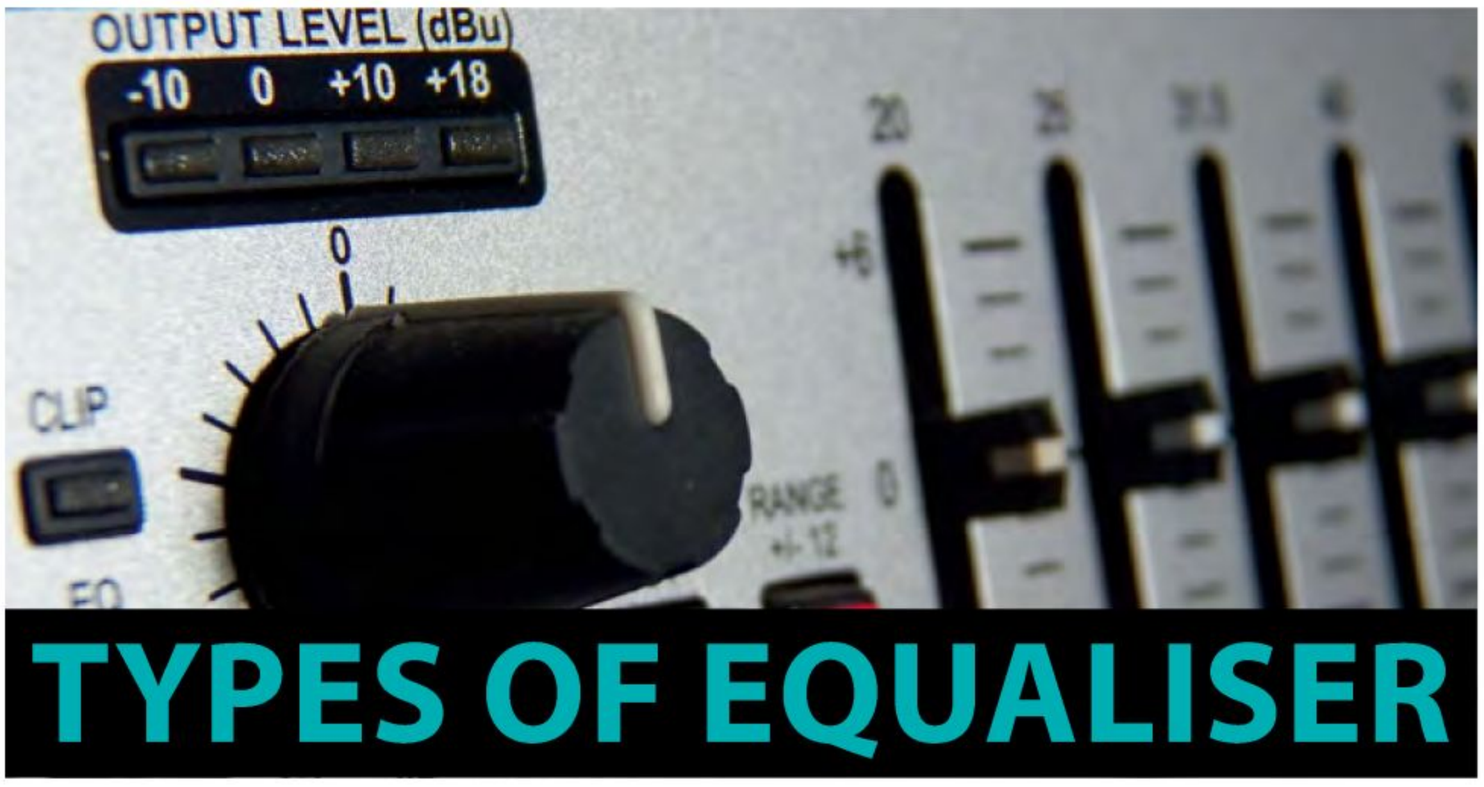
THE FUTURE DRUMMER

What's the frequency, Tom?

Words: Tom Derryman



TYPES OF EQUALISER

Welcome back. Last month we introduced the subject of frequencies, looking at the 'frequency spectrum'. We covered the basics (what it is and why it is important) before breaking it down into some commonly-recognised categories, known as the 'frequency ranges'. Finally, we thought about what instrument sounds may occur in the different ranges. This month we explore options for taking control of these frequencies so we can strive for improved clarity, definition and balance within the sonics of our productions as a whole.

THE RIGHT TOOL FOR THE JOB

Which audio processor can we use to gain full control of the frequencies within our sounds? Well if you hadn't already guessed, it's the 'equaliser' or EQ as it's commonly abbreviated to. It's more than likely you will have come across EQ processors in some form or another before, be it on a home or car stereo, on a mixing desk or even on a guitar amp or effect pedal. So what does an EQ do? It is a processor that allows us to adjust the volume of specific frequencies across the frequency spectrum; turning them up in volume is referred to as a 'boost' and turning them down in volume is referred to as a 'cut'.

By boosting and cutting specific frequencies we can tailor our sounds. For example, if we want our kick drum sample to sound fatter and more weighty we can emphasise the lower frequencies by applying an EQ boost. Or in contrast, if we want our snare sample to sound thinner and sharper in the mix we could apply an EQ cut to the lower frequencies. The way in which we cut and boost the frequencies depends on the specific type of EQ we are using, of which there are lots, so let's take a look at the most common types.

PARAMETRIC EQS (FILTERS)

The most used EQs in the world of digital audio are parametric filter EQs, which are visually presented on an X/Y graph. As **figure 1** shows, the two axes represent the frequency spectrum and the gain levels.

The classic types of filter EQs are: low-pass filters (LPF), high pass filters (HPF), band pass filter (BPF), shelving filters (SF) and peaking filters (PF).

LPFs allow us to cut the higher frequencies out of the sound, letting the low frequencies pass through, hence the name, as per **figure 2**.

Classic use of a low pass filter would be to roll any unwanted higher frequencies off of a sample with majority low frequency content, such as bass lines or kick drums.

HPFs do the opposite; they allow us to cut the bottom off of our sounds, letting the high frequencies to pass through, as per **figure 3**.

Classic use of a high pass filter would be to roll any unwanted lower frequencies off of sounds with generally higher frequency content, such as guitar or vocal loops. BFPs combine both LPFs and HPFs together, allowing us to roll the bottom and top off of a sound, leaving us with a specific frequency band left uncut, as shown in **figure 4**.

The classic 'wah-wah' guitar effect can be recreated using a BPF by quickly moving it up and down through the frequency spectrum.

SFs work on a different principle that allows us to boost or gain whole sections of the frequency spectrum. These filters, unlike LPFs and HPFs, do not cut to zero but simply create a shelf in the sound, as shown in **figures 5 to 8**.

Classic use of SFs would be to either cut or boost the whole higher or lower frequency region of a sound.

Finally we have PFs, **figures 9 to 12,** which are the most versatile type of filter at our disposal. They allow us to have full control over how specific the boost or cut that we apply is.

Another popular type of EQ is a graphic EQ. These are often found on older home stereos, some guitar pedals and also on PA systems. A graphic EQ has a number of preset faders that stretch across the frequency spectrum and we can boost or cut these as we wish. These EQs are less adaptable than the parametric filters but are often used for live sound EQing because of their simplicity. They are not commonly used when working with samples inside samplers.

Next month we will explore some methods behind the use of these tools to improve the overall sound of our mix.

Catch you all next month. ●

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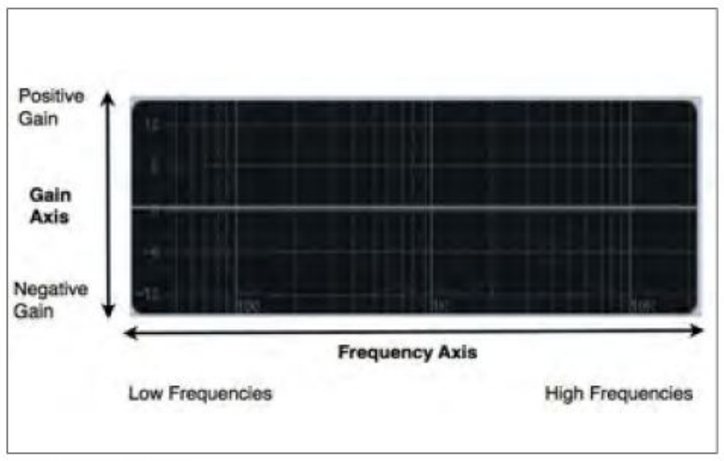

FIGURE 1

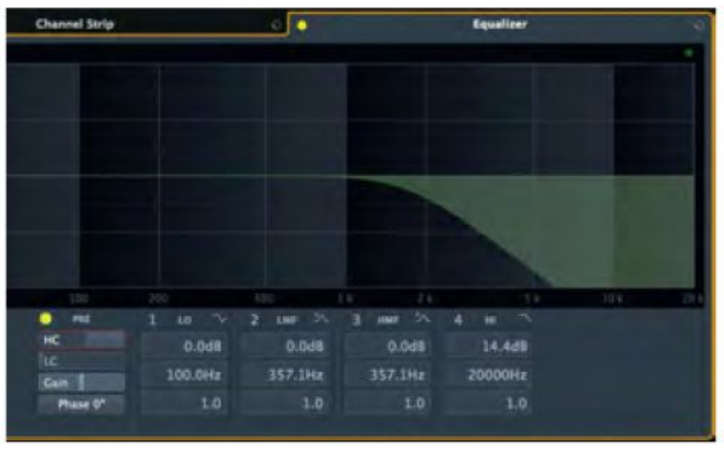

FIGURE 2

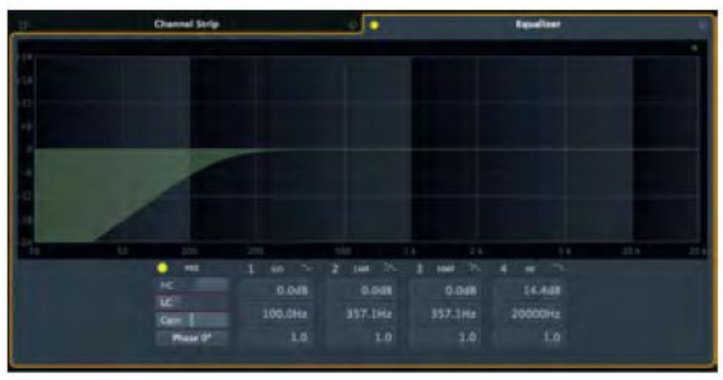

FIGURE 3

FIGURE 4

FIGURE 5

FIGURE 6

FIGURE 7

FIGURE 8

FIGURE 9

FIGURE 10

FIGURE 11

FIGURE 12

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MAD, BAD AND DANGEROUS

Dave Mattacks plays the 'do you know who I am?' game at a Jethro Tull after-party

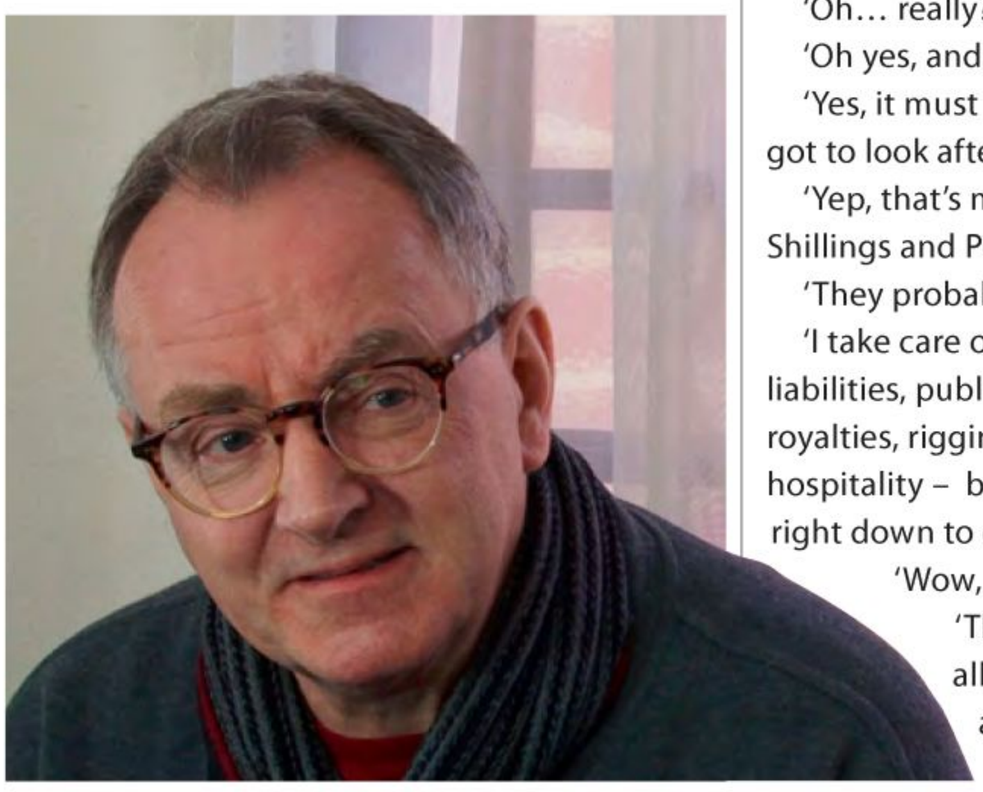
Words: Spike Webb

Dave Mattacks is well known for his early work with electric folk legends Fairport Convention back in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Since then he has become a session and touring legend in his own right, playing with a roll call of big names including Paul McCartney, George Harrison, Elton John, Richard Thompson, Chris Rea, Jethro Tull, Alison Moyet, Jimmy Page, the Proclaimers and more latterly Feast of Fiddles and Rosanne Cash.

I was introduced to Dave by industry consultant Jerome Marcus for one of our 'Mad, Bad and Dangerous' film interviews one sunny afternoon after a Feast of Fiddles sound check at a village deep in the Hertfordshire countryside. He told us about an amusing incident after a Jethro Tull gig a while back:

"Jethro Tull are a great band to tour with because their gigs are so well received wherever they go. The material is always varied and they make a point of bringing the shows to a dramatic conclusion with loads of high energy and explosive dynamics that really work the audience up into a frenzy.

"Tonight is no exception. We're finishing our set with the encore 'Locomotive Breath' to a packed and enthusiastic crowd of 10,000 people. As we leave the stage and make our way through the backstage labyrinth of corridors towards the dressing rooms and hospitality area, I'm anticipating the inevitable sea of sincerity that goes with the backstage party afterwards.



"In fact, I notice a slightly larger entourage of friends and specially invited guests with triple A passes than usual. Soon the band, personal assistants and comrades are enjoying a drink and congratulating each other with plenty of back slapping…

'You played well tonight Martin…'

'Thanks, you weren't so bad yourself…'

"I notice two particularly excited looking guests/hangers-on talking in earnest with Ian Anderson. They seem to be congratulating him on a great show and praising the band in general. After a while Ian is beckoned away by someone else and the guys he's been talking to start looking around aimlessly for a while before spotting me propping up the bar.

"As they approach me I'm thinking I'll have to start talking drums but soon I realise that's not the case.

'So what do you do then?'

"I'm about to tell them I'm the guy they've been watching play the drums for the last two hours when I change my mind.

'Oh, I'm the band's accountant…'

'Pardon?'

'I'm employed to look after all the financial affairs of Jethro Tull…'

'Oh… really? That's nice.'

'Oh yes, and it's very interesting…' I say.

'Yes, it must be… and I suppose somebody's got to look after them.'

'Yep, that's me. They call me Mr Pounds, Shillings and Pence'

'They probably don't have time themselves…'

'I take care of everything: tax implication liabilities, publishing royalties, performance royalties, rigging costs, travel costs, after-show hospitality – beer, wine, water, all the catering right down to every last vol-au-vent…'

'Wow, well, er…'

'That's why they invite me to all the shows and the parties afterwards'

'Well, nice to meet you… and er, keep up the good work.'

"They shuffle off looking a bit bewildered with absolutely no idea that I am the drummer in the band they've been so avidly watching and praising tonight. I'm reminded of something my wife once said to me many years ago: 'There you are, bashing away on the bongos at the back with the others prancing about at the front – no wonder nobody ever pays any attention to you.'"

Even though drummers have taken up a newly enhanced status in the general scheme of things over the last ten years or so, the fact remains that they are still essentially stuck at the back. And however essential they are to the essence of every live performance of any form of beat music they still stay firmly in their place when it comes to the limelight. Unless you're Tommy Lee, of course. ●

ABOUT SPIKE WEBB...

Drummer and author Spike Webb spent three years tracking down over 40 drummers including legends like Nick Mason (Pink Floyd) and Topper Headon (the Clash). He met them in cafes and bars to collect a mass of stories and create the ultimate drummers' anthology. Since the publication of *Mad, Bad and Dangerous*, Spike has continued on his adventures and interviewed some of the drummers live on film, meeting even more legends like Kenney Jones, Mel Gaynor and Derrick McKenzie. With so many world-class drummers coming on board, *Mad, Bad and Dangerous* is fast becoming the official voice of the boys at the back. Well, someone had to do it and about time, too…

Mad, Bad and Dangerous is available on order from *Drummer*, in bookstores and online at Amazon both as a paperback and Kindle ebook.

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